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A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES;

DESIGNED TO SHEW,

That they are ARGUMENTS of a DIVINE INTERPOSITION,

AND

Absolute PROOFS of the Mission and Doctrine of a PROPHET.

Believe me for the very Works sake. JOHN xiv. 11.

A NEW EDITION, CORRECTED.

BY HUGH FARMER.

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PREFACE.

THE Chriſtian revelation well deſerves the eſteem of mankind, on account of its intrinſic excellence; nevertheleſs, the proper proof of its divine original is, that miraculous teſtimony which was borne to thoſe who firſt publiſhed it to the world. But, unhappily for the intereſts of the Goſpel, its moſt learned advocates have greatly impaired, if not deſtroyed, the force of this teſtimony, by aſſerting the power of inviſible beings, of different and oppoſite characters, to work miracles.

This opinion (than which ſcarce any has been more generally inculcated) has occaſioned much perplexity to many ſincere Chriſtians. When they ſurvey the miracles of the Goſpel, they can ſcarce help *feeling* the force of the argument ariſing from them in favour of its divinity: but, when they recur to their ſpeculative opinions concerning the power of evil ſpirits, their minds are in the ſame ſituation with that of the moſt learned of all the Jews *, when

* Maimonides, de Fund. leg. c. 8. ſect. 1. Compare the paſſage from Dr. Clarke, cited ch. 2. ſect. 6. p. 84.

he confeſſed " a ſuſpicion, that all miracles may be " wrought by the power of magic or incantation."

What has ſerved to perplex the friends of revelation, has emboldened others to reject it. From the earlieſt ages of Chriſtianity, down to the preſent day, unbelievers have treated the argument from miracles (as it is commonly ſtated) not only as an improper means of conviction, but as an affront to their underſtandings. Celſus, (in a paſſage we ſhall have occaſion to cite *,) not without an equal mixture of ſcorn and indignation, upbraids Chriſtians with their abſurdity, in making uſe of the ſame works, to prove one perſon to be a divine meſſenger, and to diſgrace another as a magician and impoſtor. And a late celebrated writer, when arguing againſt thoſe who allow the devil a power of performing miracles, and who, (according to his conception,) after proving the doctrine by the miracle, are reduced to prove the miracle by the doctrine; aſks and reſolves the following queſtion: " Now, what is to be done in this caſe? There " is but one ſtep to be taken, to recur to reaſon, and " leave miracles to themſelves: better indeed had it " been never to have had recourſe to them, nor to " have perplexed good ſenſe with ſuch a number of " ſubtle diſtinctions †."

It may, perhaps, be ſaid, " That could deiſts be " perſuaded of the *truth* of the Scripture miracles, " they would not deny their *divinity*." But the ſame

* Ch. 2. ſect. 6. p. 83.

† Rouſſeau, in his Emilius, V. 3. p. 113.

ſame opinion concerning the miraculous power of wicked ſpirits, which furniſhes them with an objection againſt the divinity of the miracles of Scripture, ſupplies them with the ſtrongeſt argument againſt their truth. For they cannot perſuade themſelves, that God, when he ſees fit to give proofs of his own extraordinary interpoſition, will chuſe ſuch as are deceitful or ambiguous. And whatever their own ſentiments may be with reſpect to the power of evil beings to work miracles; yet, as long as they are taught to believe that the Scripture aſcribes to them this power, they will think themſelves warranted by the Scripture itſelf to reject or diſregard its miracles.

The more I reflect upon this ſubject, the more fully am I convinced, that it is entirely owing to *the natural impreſſion* which miracles make upon the human mind, and not to thoſe ſpeculative opinions which have been moſt commonly entertained concerning them, that Chriſtianity has maintained its ground in the world. And to theſe natural impreſſions we might ſafely truſt the cauſe of revelation; were they not liable to be effaced by the power of ſuperſtition, and the ſophiſtry of ſcience, falſely ſo called. In other inſtances, as well as in this, the natural ſenſe of mankind may be in ſome meaſure ſubdued by the force of oppoſite principles. And whenever this is the caſe, it becomes neceſſary to ſhew that thoſe principles are ill founded.

What is attempted in the following ſheets, is, to refute thoſe principles of demoniſm, which have done ſo much diſcredit to the argument drawn from miracles in favour of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations.

Without entering into an examination of the peculiar nature and circumſtances of the Scripture miracles, I conſider only *the general queſtion*, Whether miracles are, in themſelves, evidences of a divine interpoſition; and conſequently (when properly applied) certain proofs of the divine original of a ſupernatural revelation? Nor is it merely the credit of revelation that is concerned in this queſtion; but the honour alſo of the general adminiſtration of divine providence, and the common intereſts of piety and virtue. And one would imagine, that all men would wiſh to ſee the affirmative of this queſtion fully proved: for what can contribute more to our happineſs, than the belief that the world is under the government of God alone; and that no created ſpirits, much leſs ſuch as oppoſe his benevolent and wiſe deſigns, can diſturb that courſe and order of things which he has eſtabliſhed? With reſpect to the friends of revelation, there is this additional reaſon to diſpoſe them in favour of this principle, that they muſt allow, that (at leaſt) it facilitates the proof of revelation, and reduces it within a narrow compaſs; leaving them only the eaſy taſk of proving the truth of the miracles of the Goſpel, in order to their fully eſtabliſhing its divine original.

Notwithſtanding many recommendations of this principle, I am ſenſible it muſt meet with oppoſition from the prejudices of mankind, which inſenſibly bias even upright enquirers after truth. Many are ready to acknowledge, that an opinion is not therefore falſe, becauſe it contradicts received notions; and yet but few are duly ſenſible how exceeding difficult

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it is to get rid of falſe opinions, early entertained, conſtantly inculcated, and ſtamped with the authority of thoſe who are moſt reſpected for their learning and abilities. Habits have as great an influence over the judgments, as over the actions of mankind.

The ſubject before us certainly deſerves an impartial and attentive examination. And though the manner in which it is here handled may be liable to ſeveral objections; yet the author hopes for ſome indulgence from thoſe who are acquainted with the difficulties with which the ſubject was embarraſſed, and conſider the compaſs neceſſary to be taken in treating it. One objection it may be proper here to obviate, viz. "that by maintaining, that miracles, "if they are not works peculiar to God, form no "concluſive proof of a divine revelation; I give an "advantage to infidelity." To perſons accuſtomed to follow truth wherever it leads, ſuch language will ſeem rather to require a rebuke, than to deſerve an anſwer. It is not the language of probity, but of policy, which has ever diſcouraged all enquiries after truth, and ſtill continues to ſtop its progreſs in the world. This language betrays an unworthy ſuſpicion of the Chriſtian revelation, which, nobly conſcious of the validity of its credentials, demands a rigorous examination, and muſt in the end be a gainer by it. If the tenets advanced in the following ſheets are falſe, it is fit they ſhould be detected; and if they are true, we may embrace them with ſafety: becauſe truth will be always found conſiſtent with itſelf. It is not however the doctrine which we aſſert that gives advantage to infidelity, but that which we op-

poſe, viz. " the power of other beings beſides God " to work miracles, even in oppoſition to heaven." While this principle is maintained, and maintained upon the credit of thoſe very Scriptures whoſe authority it ſubverts; unbelievers, if we may judge by the experience of near two thouſand years, will always reject the evidence of miracles as inconcluſive. If they are to be convinced, it muſt be done, I apprehend, in the method here attempted, by ſhewing them, that this principle is as contrary to the ſenſe of revelation, as it is to the genuine dictates of reaſon; and conſequently that miracles, being appropriate to God, conſtitute a certain proof of a divine miſſion, and are the moſt proper means of confirming and propagating a new revelation.

I will only add, that it was never more neceſſary to do juſtice to revelation on this ſubject, than in the preſent age; which is every day making ſuch quick advances in the knowledge of nature. For hereby we are daily furniſhed with new proofs, that in the ſyſtem of nature there is no combat of oppoſite powers; that all the parts of which that ſyſtem is compoſed, though infinitely various, act by uniform laws, and conſpire together in carrying on the ſame deſign; and conſequently that they are under the conſtant direction of *One* almighty Ruler. Will not the prejudices of unbelievers therefore be every day increaſing, while men miſrepreſent revelation as teaching the contrary doctrine?

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Shewing, that Miracles, conſidered as divine interpoſitions, are a certain Proof of the Divinity of the Miſſion and Doctrine of a Prophet. The advantages and neceſſity of this proof, in confirming and propagating a new revelation. Miracles uſeful in reviving and confirming the principles of natural religion, p. 352.

Under what circumſtances, miracles prove the divinity of a prophet's miſſion and doctrine, p. 352. Two extremes to be guarded againſt; that of conſidering miracles as proofs only of power, on the one hand, p. 355; and, on the other, that of repreſenting them as proofs of the univerſal and perpetual inſpiration of the perſon who performs them, p. 357. 1.] The proof from miracles of the divine commiſſion and doctrine of a prophet, is in itſelf deciſive and abſolute, p. 361. 2.] This proof is natural, and agreeable to the common ſenſe of mankind in all ages, p. 364. 3.] It is eaſy and compendious, p. 368. 4.] Miracles are a powerful method of conviction, p. 370. 5.] Yet not violent nor compulſive, p. 371. 6.] Miracles neceſſary to atteſt a divine commiſſion, and to confirm and propagate a new revelation, ſuch eſpecially as contradict men's prejudices and paſſions, p. 372. 7.] Miracles ſerve to revive and confirm the principles of natural religion, and to recover men from the two oppoſite extremes of atheiſm and idolatry, p. 375. 8.] The evidence of miracles, whether of power or knowledge, is the fitteſt to accompany a ſtanding revelation; becauſe it may be conveyed to diſtant ages and nations, p. 381. Concluſion.

A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES.

CHAP. I.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

BEFORE we enquire, whether miracles are the peculiar works of God, and *in themſelves* proper evidences of a divine interpoſition, and conſequently of a ſupernatural revelation; it will be neceſſary to prepare the way by ſeveral preliminary conſiderations. I ſhall begin with

SECT. I.

Explaining the Nature of Miracles.

THAT the viſible world is governed by ſtated general rules, commonly called the laws of nature; or that there is an order of cauſes and effects eſtabliſhed in every part of the ſyſtem of nature, ſo far as it falls under our obſervation; is a point which none can controvert. Effects produced by the

regular operation of the laws of nature, or that are conformable to its eſtabliſhed courſe, are called *natural*. Effects contrary to this ſettled conſtitution and courſe of things, I eſteem *miraculous*. Were the conſtant motion of the planets to be ſuſpended, or a dead man to return to life; each of theſe would be a miracle; becauſe repugnant to thoſe general rules, by which this world is governed at all other times.

All miracles pre-ſuppoſe an eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of nature, within the limits of which they operate, and with the order of which they diſagree. The creation of the world at firſt, therefore, though an immediate effect of divine omnipotence, would not come under this denomination. It was different from, but not contrary to, that courſe of nature, which had not hitherto taken place. And miracles may be ſaid to diſagree with, or to be contrary to, the general rules and order of the natural ſyſtem, not only when they *change* the former qualities of any of the conſtituent parts of nature, (as when water, for example, is converted into wine:) or when they *controul* their uſual operation and effects, (as when fire, without loſing its properties, does not burn combuſtible materials; or a river is divided in its courſe, the water ſtill preſerving its gravity:) but alſo when they *ſuperſede* (as they always do) the uſual operation of natural cauſes. For effects produced in the pre-eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of nature, without the aſſiſtance of natural cauſes, are manifeſt variations from, or contradictions to, the order and uſual courſe of things in that ſyſtem. That a man ſhould be enabled to ſpeak a new language, which he never learnt in a natural way, and that his body

body ſhould be ſupported without food; are events evidently contrary to the ordinary courſe of things, and to that conſtitution of divine providence, which renders mankind dependent upon their own ſtudy and application for the knowledge of languages, and upon food for ſuſtenance. We do not affirm, that miracles do univerſally and neceſſarily imply a proper *ſuſpenſion* of the laws of the natural world, ſo as that they ſhould ceaſe to produce their uſual effects: the human mind may receive new knowledge in a ſupernatural manner, without any ſuſpenſion of its preſent powers. Nevertheleſs, the ſupernatural communication of new knowledge to the human mind, is contrary to the general rules by which the human ſyſtem is governed, or to that connexion which God has eſtabliſhed between our acquiſition of knowledge, and the proper exerciſe of our rational faculties.

To this account of miracles it has been objected, 1*ſt;* "That miracles may be performed, where "there is no diſagreement with any law of nature, "nor any variation from its eſtabliſhed courſe: be- "cauſe many things which exceed the power of man, "may be performed by ſuperior beings." This objection has been illuſtrated and ſupported in the following manner: "*A ſpirit* may have a natural power "of lifting up a ſtone from the earth; and therefore "if he does ſo, there is no law of nature contra- "dicted, any more than when *a man* lifts it up. "Were a man to walk upon the water, upheld by "ſome *inviſible power*, the law of gravitation would "no more be violated or ſuſpended, than if he was "upheld by ſome *viſible power*. What departure is

" there from the laws and conſtitution of the uni-
" verſe, when a diſeaſe is cured by a ſuperior being,
" any more than when it is cured by the force of
" ſome powerful medicine; unleſs there be a law of
" nature or conſtitution of the univerſe forbidding
" the occaſional interpoſition of ſuperior beings in
" this lower world? a point which ought not to be
" taken for granted, and aſſumed into the definition
" of miracles."

In anſwer to this objection, we may obſerve, that it is built on a miſapprehenſion of what I here intend by the laws of nature. For though the word, *nature*, may be ſometimes uſed for the whole compaſs of exiſtence, created and uncreated; (in which ſenſe of the word, no effect can ever be produced contrary to the laws of nature, that is, to the natural powers of all orders of exiſtence;) yet this is not the moſt common acceptation of the word, nor that in which it is here uſed. Neither do I apply this term to the conſtitution of the univerſe, and comprehend under it the inviſible worlds, and thoſe ſuperior beings that inhabit them. By the laws of nature, I here mean, thoſe rules by which the viſible world is ſtatedly governed, or the ordinary courſe of events in it, as fixed and aſcertained by obſervation and experience; and particularly the order of that ſyſtem to which we belong *. Now according to the uſual courſe of events

* Thus, for example, that there is a force impreſſed upon all bodies whereby they mutually attract, or tend towards each other, according to the quantity of matter they contain, and in a certain

events in this ſyſtem, a ſtone which lies upon the ground, will reſt there, till it is removed by ſome *corporeal force*, ſuperior to that by which it gravitates towards the earth: all bodies ſpecifically heavier than water, will ſink in it, when no *bodily ſubſtance* interpoſes to prevent it: and the diſeaſes of our animal frame will continue, till the conſtitution, either by its own efforts, or by the aſſiſtance of material cauſes, returns to its original ſtate. And therefore there is a real tranſgreſſion of theſe ſeveral laws of matter and motion, when a ſtone is raiſed up in the air, or

a certain proportion to their diſtances: that every body perſeveres in the ſame ſtate, either of reſt, or uniform rectilinear motion, except ſo far as it is compelled to change that ſtate by ſome foreign force: that the change of motion is ever proportioned to the moving force whereby it is effected, and in the direction of the right line wherein that force is impreſſed: and that the actions of two bodies on one another are always mutually equal, and directed contrary ways: theſe are laws of nature, or general rules obſerved by natural bodies in their actions on one another, and in all the changes which befal them in their natural ſtate. It may be ſaid, that the general laws of nature denote only the *phænomena* or objects of nature. To me they ſeem to expreſs ſomewhat more, viz. that the phænomena are connected together in a certain order, and ſucceed one another in an invariable train, according to ſome general rules, fixed by divine wiſdom. Nor does it appear, that any part of the natural ſyſtem, (not even the ſmalleſt particle of matter, any more than the vaſt body of the ſun or earth,) is ever moved; but according to theſe ſtated rules. The more nature is ſtudied, and the better it is underſtood; the more reaſon have we to believe, that its laws are ſtrictly and inviolably obſerved.

ſupported on the ſurface of the water *, without the application of any corporeal force; or when a diſeaſe is cured, without the aſſiſtance of the ſprings and powers belonging to the human frame, or the application of any ſuitable medicine.

In affirming all miracles to be deviations from or contradictions to the laws and order eſtabliſhed in all the parts of the creation, which fall under human cognizance; it is not ſuppoſed or taken for granted, that there is a law or conſtitution of the univerſe preventing the occaſional interpoſition of all ſuperior beings in this viſible world, for the purpoſe of working miracles. Whether there are *any;* and if any, *what* other beings there are in the univerſe, who have a power of interpoſing for any ſuch purpoſe; is left undetermined by our definition, and is the point which is to fall under future examination. All that our definition implies as a thing allowed, is, that, as far as our obſervation reaches, there is an eſtabliſhed diſpoſition and courſe of things, or that certain cauſes uniformly produce certain effects, according to fixed laws or rules. Every contradiction to this conſtitution of the natural ſyſtem, and the correſpondent courſe of events in it, I call a miracle, by *whatever* ſpiritual

* If in this and the foregoing inſtance the law of gravitation be not ſuſpended, but only overcome by the interpoſition of ſome ſpiritual agent: yet on this ſuppoſition, a real miracle is performed; becauſe the operation and effects of the law of gravitation are controuled, in a manner repugnant to the general rules by which the natural world is governed.

ſpiritual beings it is apprehended to be effected, whether created agents, or the Creator himſelf.

Thoſe who have oppoſed this notion of miracles, have not attended to the obvious diſtinction between *the uſual courſe of nature* in this viſible world, and *the* (ſuppoſed) *natural powers of inviſible agents:* and they will not allow, that the former is changed, if the effect produced does not exceed the latter. But ſuppoſe an angel to be as able to carry a man through the air, as a man is to carry a child in his arms; nevertheleſs the former would be contrary, and the latter conformable to thoſe general laws or rules of motion obſerved by bodies in our ſyſtem in their actions on one another. And if no effect can be ſaid to be repugnant to the courſe of nature, unleſs when it ſurpaſſes the natural power of the agent; then, till the utmoſt power of the agent is known, it can never be determined whether the operation agrees with the courſe of nature or not. Nay, it would follow, from this principle, that the courſe of nature can never be changed: for ſuch a change cannot be effected, but by an agent who has power equal to the work; and yet if the agent has power equal to the work, then the courſe of nature is not changed. On this principle, the courſe of nature cannot be changed by God himſelf, merely becauſe he has a natural power of doing it. And yet who does not perceive, that his cauſing the ſun to ſtand ſtill for twenty-four hours though it lies within the compaſs of his omnipotence, would be a variation from the order of nature, or the common courſe of events in the natural world?

2dly; As ſome will not allow, that *the order of na-*

ture is contradicted, ſo others deny, that *any miracle is performed;* unleſs the action exceeds the utmoſt capacities of the agent. Accordingly they maintain *, that the ſame action may be or not be miraculous, according to the different abilities of the performer. Were *a man*, ſay they, to ſtop the courſe of the heavenly bodies, which is above the reach of all the powers of his nature; this would be a miraculous operation: but were *a ſuperior being*, who had power equal to ſuch a work, to ſuſpend the motion of the heavenly bodies; this would be no miracle at all. But this opinion is liable to many of the ſame difficulties with the other. For from hence will it not follow, that while the agent is unknown, it will be impoſſible to determine whether the operation is or is not miraculous? and likewiſe that God himſelf can never work miracles, becauſe he is naturally able to work them? Nay, as, according to the former opinion, no law of nature can ever be ſuperſeded or controuled; ſo, according to the latter, no miracle can ever be performed: it being impoſſible that any action ſhould exceed the power of the real agent. Every effect muſt neceſſarily have an adequate cauſe. An effect, therefore, which is beyond the ability of the perſon who produces it, ſeems rather an abſurdity, than a miracle.

Should it be alledged, "that what the man himſelf has no power of performing, he may do by "the aſſiſtance of a ſuperior being:" it would be eaſy

* Dr. Chandler in particular, in his diſcourſe of the nature and uſe of miracles, p. 17, maintains this opinion.

eaſy to reply, that this ſuperior being is the only proper agent, the work being accompliſhed by his power alone. When we ſpeak of a prophet as the *performer* of his miracles, nothing more is to be underſtood by this popular language, than that they *take place* agreeably to his declaration, and are deſigned as a teſtimony to his miſſion. He is not, in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, the proper agent; the works are not done *by* him, but *for* him, by that inviſible being who interpoſes in his behalf. If the works did not exceed his own ability, they could be no atteſtation to his character, nor proofs of the interpoſition of any ſuperior being whatever. And the ſame works would be equally miraculous, were they to be performed for any other purpoſe, than that of bearing teſtimony to a prophet, or even without his intervention. The reſurrection of Chriſt, and that of thoſe who came out of their graves at the ſame time, though accompliſhed *immediately by God;* were as real miracles, as if they had been effected, as many others were, *at the voice*, or *by the inſtrumentality of man.* When miracles are performed *at the inſtance or with the intervention of man;* this circumſtance ſerves to point out *the relation* they bear to him, not to prove their being done by his *power*. The caſe mentioned above, and which is framed with a view to ſhew, that a miracle is an operation beyond the ability of the agent; ſeems very incapable of anſwering the purpoſe. To ſtop the courſe of the celeſtial bodies, is ſaid to be either ſupernatural or not, according as the agent wants or poſſeſſes power equal to the work. But how could this (or any other) operation be performed by a power

power unequal to it? It could be deemed miraculous on no other account, than its contrariety to the general courſe of nature. If it was performed at the prayer of a prophet; this would better ſerve the purpoſe of atteſting his character, but would make no alteration in the nature of the work itſelf.

Moſt writers, in defining a miracle, ſeem to place it, not in *the effect produced*, but in the *cauſe*, or at leaſt include the latter in their definition. A *miraculous effect*, like every *common appearance*, has its own proper ſpecific nature, diſtinguiſhing it from all others of a different kind, ſeparate from the conſideration of its cauſe. And it is the operation or effect alone, which is affirmed to be contrary to that eſtabliſhed order and diſpoſition of things, commonly called the courſe of nature: the real inviſible agent by whom the effect is produced, though he acts out of his uſual ſphere, exerts only his natural powers. The contrariety or conformity of the event itſelf to thoſe laws by which this world is governed in the courſe of God's general providence, is that alone which denominates and conſtitutes it a proper miracle or not. In this light, at leaſt, the ſubject appears to me; though, conſidering the many different views taken of it by our ableſt writers, it becomes me to propoſe my ſentiments upon it, with a juſt deference to the judgment of others *.

From

* The greater part of our lateſt writers upon this ſubject, define miracles, *effects unuſual, above human power, and manifeſting the interpoſition of ſuperior power.* The following reaſons prevented me from adopting this definition. 1. The term *unuſual*

From the account here given of miracles, as operations contrary to the courſe of nature, the following concluſions are fairly deducible.

1*ſt*; No

uſual does not diſtinguiſh real miracles from many things which are not miraculous, ſuch as the *rare* and *uncommon* appearances and productions of nature. 2. Nor does the calling a miracle, *an effect above human power*, diſtinguiſh it from all other effects equally above human power, produced by ſuperior beings when acting *within their uſual ſphere*, which for that reaſon cannot be miraculous. 3. As this definition comprehends many things which are not miraculous, and to which no perſons apply the term; ſo it excludes many things which are allowed by all to be proper miracles. For there ſeems to be a difference between effects *above* human power, or which argue a higher degree of power; and effects which argue a power barely *different* from human, and in no manner ſuperior to it. If a ſtone of a pound weight were ſuſpended in the air by *an angel;* all would admit this to be a miracle. But does this argue a greater power than is exerted, when a ſtone of the ſame weight, or one 50 times heavier, is ſuſpended by *a man?* To make a piece of iron to ſwim, (a miracle aſcribed to Eliſha, 2 Kings vi. 6.) may not abſolutely require more power, than men exert every day in different methods, though it requires a power which *does not belong* to their nature. 4. According to this definition, beaſts and birds may work miracles; for they do many things that are above the power of man. 5. This definition, inſtead of deſcribing miracles by *the nature of the works themſelves*, deſcribes them by their *author*, and *the degree of power* ſuppoſed neceſſary to their performance. 6. Works which argue only a power more than human, can be no abſolute proofs of a divine interpoſition. 7. The laſt part of the definition, *manifeſting the interpoſition of ſuperior power*, is ſuperfluous. It is only ſaying, effects *above* human power, muſt be produced by a power *above* it.

1ſt; No event, however *unuſual* or *ſtrange*, however *wonderful* and *unaccountable*, can on theſe accounts alone be deemed miraculous, or contrary to nature; ſince it may be only the leſs known or the leſs common effect of its eſtabliſhed laws and order. Comets, eclipſes, monſtrous births, prodigies, the peculiar properties of particular bodies, and all the rare appearances of nature, however they may raiſe mens wonder, eſpecially in the more ignorant ages of the world; are as regular effects of the laws of the natural world, as any of thoſe with which we are moſt familiar. Under certain circumſtances the *monſter* is nature's *genuine* iſſue; and in the ſame circumſtances there would always be the ſame kind of production *. Where nature proceeds regularly in her courſe, without being ſubject to any adventitious influence; there no miracle is performed.

2dly; In order to determine whether any operation be truly miraculous; it is not neceſſary to inquire into the powers of ſuperior created intelligences, and to ſhew how far they do or do not extend. Such inquiries are wholly relative to the *cauſe* or *author* of miracles, and are of no uſe in ſettling their proper ſpecific *nature*, as deviations from or contradictions to the ordinary courſe of things. They do, indeed, neceſſarily argue the interpoſition of ſome ſpiritual agent, who is equal to ſuch works; but their nature is the ſame, whether that agent be God, or an angel, or an evil demon.

3dly; Before we can pronounce with certainty any effect

* Wollaſton's Religion of Nature, p. 151. 7th ed. 8vo.

effect to be a true miracle, it is neceſſary, (and nothing more is neceſſary, than) that the common courſe of nature be in ſome degree firſt underſtood. In all thoſe caſes in which we are *ignorant* of nature; it is impoſſible to determine what is or is not a deviation from it, or to diſtinguiſh between miracles and natural effects. Even a real miracle cannot be admitted as ſuch, or carry any conviction, to thoſe who are not aſſured that the event is contradictory to the courſe of nature. On the other hand, in all caſes in which the courſe of nature is *underſtood;* it will be eaſy to determine whether any particular event be contrary or conformable to it, that is, whether it be a real miracle *. Miracles therefore are not, what ſome repreſent them, appeals to our ignorance; they ſuppoſe ſome antecedent knowledge of nature; *without* which, it is owned, no proper judgment can be formed concerning them; though *with* it, their reality may be ſo apparent as to prevent all diſpute or heſitation. *Every ſenſible deviation from* or *contradiction to the known laws of nature, muſt be an evident and inconteſtible miracle.*

4thly; Thoſe who maintain, that both miracles and the courſe of nature are equally the operation of the divine power, have not ſufficient ground to aſſert, "that what *diſtinguiſhes* miracles from common e-"vents, is, that, with regard to the former, the in-"fluence of the divine power is obvious and ſenſi-"ble." For in both caſes, the influence (that is, the actual exertion or exerciſe) of the divine power is

* This ſubject is purſued farther, ch. i. ſec. iii.

is ſecret and inviſible; and the evidence and effects of it may in both be alike ſenſible and obvious. Nor is it neceſſary that all miracles ſhould anſwer this deſcription, but ſuch only as are deſigned for the conviction of mankind. The proper diſtinction, therefore, between the miraculous and ordinary effects of the divine power, conſiſts in this, that, in the former caſe, God acts according to general laws; in the latter, he departs from them.

SECT. II.

Miracles not impoſſible to the power of God, nor neceſſarily repugnant to our ideas of his wiſdom and immutability. Neither do they imply any inconſiſtency in the divine conduct, or a defect or diſturbance of the laws of nature.

IT would at beſt be a point of uſeleſs ſpeculation, to inquire what purpoſes might be ſerved by miracles, if from the general nature of all ſuch works, there ariſes a full proof againſt their exiſtence. And ſuch proof would ariſe, in caſe they were, what ſome repreſent them, abſurd and impoſſible.

But to deny the poſſibility of miracles, is to contradict a principle the moſt certain and evident of all the deductions of reaſon, allowed even by the adverſaries of ſupernatural revelation; the being of a God. For if there exiſts an all-perfect mind, who made and governs the world, his omnipotence is a cauſe adequate to theſe marvellous operations. Infinite power, though it does not extend to contradictions, performs with eaſe

eaſe whatever is poſſible in its nature. And ſo far are miraculous works from being impoſſible, that they are ſimilar to what we ſee actually effected in the common courſe of divine providence. I will endeavour to illuſtrate this by the following example: to cauſe water to be both water and wine at the ſame time, is a manifeſt abſurdity and contradiction; and therefore cannot be the object of any power: but to turn water into wine, or to change one liquid into another ſpecifically different, is certainly within the reach of divine omnipotence; inaſmuch as there is nothing contradictory in the idea of ſuch transformation, and we obſerve continual changes of a like kind in many parts of the creation. Thus the moiſture of the earth, by a common but admirable operation in the natural world, is converted into the juice of the grape, and numberleſs other juices, differing in kind from each other, according to the different nature of the plant or tree which imbibes it.

This obſervation might be extended farther, and applied to other inſtances. Revelation is itſelf a miracle; but wherefore ſhould it be thought impoſſible with God? To his inſpiration we owe our underſtandings, with all their powers; from him we derive the noble faculty of ſpeech, by which we communicate our ideas to each other: and has the father of our ſpirits no acceſs to them, no ability of imparting immediately and directly the knowledge of his will, and of affording ſufficient evidence of his own extraordinary preſence and operation? Is there any thing in this more inexplicable, than in the common action of mind on body, or of body on mind? Will any

aſſert,

aſſert, that the almighty author of our frame is unable to repair the diſorders of it? that he, who with ſuch exquiſite ſkill formed the ſeeing eye and the hearing ear, cannot reſtore ſight to the blind and hearing to the deaf? or that it is impoſſible for *him* to raiſe the dead, who every year renews the face of nature, and revives the ſeed ſown in the earth, and every day awakens mankind from the death of ſleep to new life, in a manner as incomprehenſible by us as the greateſt miracle? He gave being to every living thing, to innumerable kinds of animals, and to a great diverſity of rational creatures; continually does he call into exiſtence ten thouſand new individuals: and is a ſecond gift of life more difficult than the firſt? The analogy between miracles, and the common operations of God in the ſettled courſe of nature, is a convincing demonſtration of the poſſibility of the former.

Nothing can lead men to controvert a point ſo obvious as this, but their not conſidering, that the courſe of nature, which denotes only the ſtated laws by which the world is governed, is certainly the voluntary appointment of God, if not the immediate operation of his power. For if it be admitted, that nature is the operation or conſtitution of God; it cannot be denied, that the power exerted in producing natural, may alſo produce preternatural effects; there being no other difference between them than this, that in the former caſe, the operations are regular, uniform, and conſtant; in the latter, occaſional, uncommon, and out of the ordinary tract of God's adminiſtration. Upon what grounds can it be

be concluded, that God is limited to a ſettled courſe of acting, and to the preſent laws of nature? Is he not a free agent? Did he not act without the intervention of natural cauſes, when he created the world at firſt, and ſettled the preſent conſtitution and courſe of things? It muſt ſolely depend on the will of the Deity, in what manner he ſhall exerciſe his own power; whether in continuing or controuling the courſe of nature, which is his own appointment; that is, whether he ſhall work miracles or not. Thus, for example, it is owing either to his original law, or immediate agency, that the planets move round a centre, and keep in their reſpective orbits: but the ſame omnipotent hand which guides them in their preſent courſe, could eaſily arreſt them, or give them a new direction. To deny this, is to deny that God is at liberty to act as he ſees fit, that he has any power over his own creation, and laws which derive all their authority from his ſovereign will. The poſſibility of miracles, therefore, cannot reaſonably be diſputed by thoſe, who believe the exiſtence of the all-perfect Divinity, the great Author and Lord of nature. And this is a principle which ought to be admitted, before we engage in inquiries into the truth of any ſuppoſed diſcoveries of his will. For if there be no God, it is obvious to all, there can be no divine revelation *.

* Miracles, indeed, which are the evidences of a ſupernatural revelation, may be uſeful to convince men of the exiſtence and perfections of the true God. Nevertheleſs, we find St. Paul, with perfect propriety, firſt inſtructing idolaters in this fundamental point, before he opened to them the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel. Acts xiv. 15. xvii. 22—31.

As miracles are not impoſſible to the *power* of God, ſo neither are they neceſſarily repugnant to our ideas of his *wiſdom* and *immutability*. Frequent miraculous interpoſitions might, indeed, argue a defect in thoſe general laws by which the world is governed; to the regular execution of which laws, we owe our ideas of order and harmony, our rational expectations of ſucceſs in all our undertakings, and our ſtrongeſt convictions of wiſe council in the frame and government of the univerſe *. And conſequently, it muſt appear highly improbable, that variations from thoſe laws ſhould take place, unleſs upon ſome ſpecial and urgent occaſions. Yet whoever reflects on the boundleſs extent and duration of the divine government, will eaſily perceive, that nothing can be more abſurd as well as arrogant, than for a man, a creature whoſe faculties are ſo limited, and who is but of yeſterday, to preſume to determine, that no fit occaſion for extraordinary interpoſals can ever occur in that adminiſtration, the plan of which tranſcends his comprehenſion. By what principles of reaſon can it be demonſtrated, that he who reigns from eternity to eternity, never formed any deſigns, except ſuch as may be accompliſhed by the preſent eſtabliſhment and ſtructure of the univerſe? In the *natural* world new phænomena have been obſerved; new luminaries in the heavens have ſuddenly ſhone out, and as ſuddenly vaniſhed. And notwithſtanding the great appearing regularity, with which the heavenly bodies perform their revolutions; yet thoſe which belong to our ſyſtem

* This argument is farther illuſtrated below, ch. ii. ſect. iii.

tem are ſubject to ſuch diſorders, as may in a ſucceſſion of ages require redreſs from the immediate hand of its creator *. And if the *natural* world may admit or demand extraordinary exertions of the divine power; much more may the *moral;* becauſe more liable to *diſorder*, and at the ſame time capable of the moſt divine *improvements*. May not God then interpoſe in an extraordinary manner, to atteſt a divine miſſion, and communicate ſome important inſtruction to his rational creatures, which they could not gather from the common operations of his providence; or to raiſe them to a ſublimer pitch of piety and virtue, than they could otherwiſe attain? If they are frail and liable to fall into ſin, and are, either as a check upon the exorbitance of paſſion, or on other accounts, wiſely and juſtly ſubjected to all the miſeries of a mortal ſtate; may not the divine Being erect a new diſpenſation to reform them from wickedneſs, to redeem them from death, and to advance them to a nobler ſtate of exiſtence? Such occaſional interpoſitions might be farther ſerviceable, by obviating the inconveniences of governing by fixed and general laws. For extraordinary interpoſitions of the divine omnipotence in controuling the courſe of nature, beſides

 anſwering

* " While comets move in very excentric orbs in all manner of poſitions, blind fate could never make all the planets move one and the ſame way in orbs concentric; ſome inconſiderable *irregularities* excepted, which may have ariſen from the mutual actions of comets and planets upon one another; and which will be apt to *increaſe* till this ſyſtem wants a *reformation*." Sir *Iſ. Newton*'s Opt. p. 378. 4th edit.

anſwering the ends to which they are more immediately directed, are well adapted to baniſh from the world the notions of neceſſity and fate, (which owe their riſe to the uniformity and eſtabliſhed order of the divine adminiſtration;) to awaken intelligent beings to a ſenſe of their duty and dependence; and to give them a new conviction, and a deeper impreſſion of God's governing power and juſtice. And if in ſuch inſtances, and for ſuch valuable purpoſes as theſe, (and there may be many others of a ſimilar kind far beyond the reach of our faculties,) the Deity ſhould diverſify his operations; would not ſuch operations diſplay, rather than obſcure, his wiſdom, benevolence, and other attributes? It would be difficult to prove, that God may not, in certain circumſtances, have *greater reaſons* for varying from his ſtated rules of acting, than for adhering to them. And whenever this is the caſe, and the end propoſed is proportionable to the means of accompliſhing it; the miracles are *worthy* of a divine interpoſition.

With regard to the *immutability* of God in particular; that cannot be reproached or impeached on account of occaſional interpoſitions; ſince they might be deſigned from the beginning, upon the foreſight of a juſt occaſion for them; and, inſtead of arguing any change in the Almighty, be only the execution, at the fore-appointed ſeaſon, of his eternal and immutable councils. Nor is it by purſuing invariably the ſame methods of providence, but by conſtantly adapting them to every different occaſion, that God diſplays his unalterable and impartial rectitude. It will not therefore follow from the ſuppoſition of God's miraculouſly

miraculouſly interpoſing his power in ſome circumſtances, that he muſt neceſſarily do it in all others, however different; becauſe in the one caſe they may be expedient or neceſſary to anſwer the wiſe deſigns of providence, and not ſo in the other.

Nor do miracles imply any inconſiſtency in the divine conduct, or any defect or diſturbance of the laws of nature. When the Deity occaſionally controuls or ſuperſedes them, he does not hereby contradict or defeat his intention in their firſt eſtabliſhment: he propoſes a deſign different from it, but not inconſiſtent with it. The laws of nature, being the laws of God, are certainly perfect, that is, perfectly adapted to anſwer all the uſes for which they are deſigned: but miracles derogate not from this perfection; becauſe they aim at an end which the laws of nature were not intended to anſwer, and indeed could not poſſibly anſwer,—the marking a ſpecial divine interpoſition, and authorizing the miſſion of him at whoſe inſtance they are performed. Nor do occaſional interpoſitions of the divine power diſturb the order of nature in the common courſe of things. The operation of nature may be controuled in particular inſtances, without affecting the general ſyſtem. Not to plead, that ſome miracles ſeem only to ſuperſede the operation of natural cauſes, without controuling it; or to produce new effects without the aſſiſtance of nature, but without interrupting it in its uſual courſe.

There is nothing then in the general idea of miracles, conſidered as variations from the common courſe of nature, to furniſh a certain univerſal proof againſt their exiſtence; and there is a power ſuperior to na-

ture, who is ever able, and who in certain circumſtances may ſee ample reaſon, to over-rule what he at firſt eſtabliſhed.

SECT. III.

Of the different cauſes to which miracles have been aſcribed. The point undertaken to be proved, is, that miracles are never effected without a divine interpoſition.

AS ſome have aſſerted the impoſſibility of miracles, even to the power of God; others, on the contrary, have repreſented them as works which may be performed without any difficulty, either by a ſkilful application of the ſecret powers of nature; or by the aſſiſtance of inviſible beings, who may be at liberty to produce ſuch effects without the immediate order of the Lord of nature. While there are ſome who allowing their poſſibility, yet conſider them as performable by God alone, or as the works of infinite power.

I. That miracles are not the effects of the hidden properties of matter, the laws of motion, and the art of man; or in other words, that they are not owing to a ſuperior knowledge and ſkilful application of the ſecret powers of nature; a few words will be ſufficient to evince. I readily grant, what ſome ſo earneſtly contend for, viz. "that we are not acquainted with all the powers of nature; that many "ſtrange properties of matter are now diſcovered, "which were not formerly known; and therefore "that

" that there may be others equally ſurprizing, " yet undiſcovered; that ſome perſons having a " greater knowledge of theſe properties than others, " may, by a dextrous application of natural cauſes " only, perform ſuch things as would amaze igno- " rant ſpectators, and be by them too haſtily miſ- " taken for real miracles; and that, ſince we cannot " univerſally determine the bounds of another's know- " ledge, it is impoſſible to aſcertain the limits of that " power which in ſome degree increaſes with his " knowledge." All this may be ſafely admitted; for whatever men may be able to do *with* the aſſiſtance of natural cauſes, it is certain that they can do nothing *without* that aſſiſtance; and conſequently cannot work miracles, which ſuperſede the operation of natural cauſes *. Beſides, though we do not know *all* the laws of nature, yet we are acquainted with *many* of them. It has been obſerved already †, that in order to determine what operations are miraculous, an antecedent knowledge of nature is requiſite. And it is a juſt inference from hence, nor are we under any concern to deny it, that, inaſmuch as our knowledge of nature is *partial*, and we cannot univerſally determine how far its powers may extend; it may be equally impoſſible for us to determine univerſally, what operations are miraculous. But, on the other hand, our ignorance of nature is not *total;* the common courſe of it is in very many inſtances perfectly underſtood by all, by the illiterate as well as the philoſopher; their own obſervation and experience im-

 parting

* Sect. i. p. 2. † Sect. i. p. 7.

parting to them very clear and ſatisfactory inſtruction concerning it; ſuch as is moſt fully confirmed by the obſervation and united teſtimony of others, in the ſeveral ages of the world. In this knowledge of the laws of nature, all our reaſonings, both in the ſciences and in the conduct of human life, and all our ideas, are founded. Conſtant, never-failing experience farther inſtructs mankind in the uniformity and conſtancy of the laws of nature: it informs us, that although men may diſcover new properties of matter, and find that natural cauſes under a ſkilful direction are capable of producing very wonderful effects; yet that they cannot ſubvert, controul, or ſuſpend any of the eſtabliſhed laws of nature *. No change in theſe fixed

* Mr. Rouſſeau, who has lately revived the objection to miracles we are here conſidering, affirms, "that it might be "in the power of one unknown law in certain caſes to change "the effects of ſuch as were known." But what reaſon can this celebrated writer aſſign in ſupport of this aſſertion? Is it agreeable to our ideas of the divine wiſdom, to ſuppoſe, that there is a perfect contradiction between the different parts of the ſame ſyſtem; that, for example, the operation of the known laws which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, may be defeated hereafter by ſome other law yet unknown? Do the new diſcoveries which are daily making in the hiſtory and operations of nature, give any ground for ſuch a ſuſpicion? And even ſuppoſing that by the diſcovery of ſome law yet unknown, the effects of thoſe already known might be defeated; this could not affect the credit of evident miracles, works ſeen and known to ſuperſede the operation of all natural cauſes, and performed without their inſtrumentality. Were we to allow Mr. Rouſſeau, that by a farther acquaintance with the powers of natnre, men may hereafter be able to raiſe the dead; it would ſtill

fixed rules of the divine government, can be effected by human power; notwithſtanding, in certain other reſpects, human power may increaſe in proportion to our knowledge. From hence it will follow, that miracles, which are effects repugnant to the ſettled laws and courſe of nature, cannot poſſibly be produced by natural cauſes, though under the moſt ſkilful direction; nor be otherwiſe accounted for, than by allowing the interpoſition of ſome being ſuperior to nature, and capable of controuling its eſtabliſhed order. And in all caſes in which the laws eſtabliſhed in the natural world are underſtood, and the effects produced are contradictory to them; we may conclude, that thoſe effects are ſupernatural. In ſuch caſes, the knowledge of

ſtill be a real and evident miracle to raiſe the dead, without the uſe and aſſiſtance of thoſe powers of nature. It has been ſaid, "That what, in one age, has been deemed a miracle, "has been found in another, more enlightened by philoſophy, "to be produced by the powers of nature." This is not true with reſpect to the miracles of Scripture. There is not one fact there repreſented as miraculous, which does not ſtill appear to be ſuch, notwithſtanding all our improvements in natural knowledge. And how will the adverſaries of revelation account for this fact? The Greek and Roman hiſtorians relate as prodigies many events now known to be perfectly natural: while the writers of the Old and New Teſtament, who relate a greater number and variety of miracles, have not mentioned one, but what appears to ſurpaſs the powers of nature now, as much as it did formerly. I only add, that if the Scripture miracles are eaſily diſtinguiſhed from natural events; it is of no moment to inquire, how far ignorance or inconſideration may lead men in other caſes to miſtake the wonders of nature for real miracles.

of the miracle is as eaſy and certain as that of the laws. To heal all ſorts of diſeaſes, even the moſt inveterate, in an inſtant, and without the uſe of natural remedies; to perform theſe cures in numberleſs inſtances, without ever failing in any one, and upon perſons abſent as well as preſent; all men muſt acknowledge, that theſe things far ſurpaſs the bounds of human power. An uniform, unvaried experience convinces us, that they do not happen according to the ſettled conſtitution of nature, and that a bare volition of the human mind cannot in any degree contribute towards their accompliſhment. Nor indeed did any man, in any age or country of the world, ever lay claim to a natural and inherent power of performing them.

Real and inconteſtible miracles are eaſily diſtinguiſhed from the artifices of impoſture, and from curious experiments in natural philoſophy; which, however unaccountable they may appear to the ignorant, can never be pronounced by them to be miraculous; becauſe they do not know them to be deviations from the courſe of nature. Nay, from the viſible natural means uſed in producing them, they have juſt reaſon to believe, that they are the effects of the powers of nature. For theſe reaſons, the motions of a crucifix, the pretended liqueſaction of blood, cures gradually effected in the uſe of natural remedies, but aſcribed to the interceſſion of ſaints, and the like juggles of popery, ought not to paſs for miracles, even with thoſe who cannot detect their impoſture: nor ſhould the ſkill of an Archimedes in raiſing an immenſe weight, with the aſſiſtance of a machine which himſelf alone underſtood, be judged

ſupernatural,

ſupernatural, how ſurprizing ſoever the effects of it might appear to one ignorant in mechanics: in this laſt caſe, the viſible application of mechanical powers; and in the former, the ſtrong ſuſpicion of fraud ariſing from the circumſtances of the facts, and the covered manner of performing them; and in both caſes an abſolute ignorance, at leaſt, whether the effects might not be produced by natural cauſes, ſhould prevent any from pronouncing them miraculous: a ſentence which ſhould be always founded on ſuch a clear knowledge of nature, as enables us to determine with certainty, that the effect in queſtion is a contradiction to its eſtabliſhed courſe.

II. There are many who admit, that real miracles exceed the utmoſt power of natural cauſes and of mankind, who nevertheleſs do not aſcribe them to God as their author.

"There are or may be in the univerſe," it is alledged, "inviſible agents, placed in a higher order "than men, and endowed with ſuperior abilities, "ſuch as are equal to the greateſt wonders; and "God may not ſee fit to reſtrain them from exer- "ciſing thoſe abilities. Miracles, therefore, are "proofs only of the interpoſition of ſome ſuperior "beings, not of God more than any other." In this manner unbelievers argue, in order to diſcredit the evidence of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations. "Were we to allow," ſay they, "the reality of the "miracles to which thoſe revelations appeal; this "alone would not eſtabliſh their divine original; "becauſe the works might be performed by other "powers lower than the divine." Nor is this the language

language only of the avowed adverſaries of all ſupernatural revelation, but even of very many of its ſincere and zealous advocates, not excepting thoſe moſt diſtinguiſhed by their learning and abilities, whoſe high reputation is ſufficient to procure a general deference to all their opinions. Dr. Clarke * in particular affirms, " that it is by no means poſſible for us " to determine what degrees of power God may rea- " ſonably be ſuppoſed to have communicated to cre- " ated beings, to ſubordinate intelligences, to *good* " or *evil* angels." And " that (unleſs we knew the " limit of *communicable* and *incommunicable* power) we " can hardly affirm with any certainty, that any par- " ticular effect, how great or miraculous ſoever it " may ſeem to us, is beyond the power of all created " beings in the univerſe to have produced." Without any deſire to detract from the juſt merit of thoſe great writers, who aſſert the power of ſuperior beings, both good and evil, to work miracles; we ſhall freely and candidly examine the doctrine they advance; than which none appears to me more groundleſs, or more dangerous. But before we enter on this examination, it will be proper to obſerve,

III. That thoſe advocates of the Chriſtian revelation who reject this account of miracles, have generally embraced another as hard to be maintained. They allow, that ſpirits, both *good* and *evil*, by " the " greater extent of their intellectual abilities, may " diſcover to men a great many *ſecrets*; and that " their ſubtlety, agility, inviſibility, and mighty force, " may

* V. ii. p. 697. fol. ed.

" may enable them to do moſt *aſtoniſhing things*, and " enable them alſo to aſſiſt men in performing many " *great and marvellous works*, ſuch as are far beyond " the reach of human capacities: while at the ſame " time they maintain, that a *real miracle* cannot be " performed by any power which is not ſtrictly *infi-* " *nite*, or otherwiſe than by the immediate exertion " of *divine omnipotence*."

Though this ſcheme be deſigned to ſave the credit of real miracles, yet it can never anſwer this end, till the abettors of it enable us to diſtinguiſh between the great and marvellous works which created ſpirits may perform, and thoſe which are peculiar to the Almighty. What purpoſe can it ſerve to call them by different *names*, while we are left in ignorance concerning their reſpective ſpecific *natures*, and are liable to miſtake the one for the other? When the learned biſhop Fleetwood allows, " that ſpirits may " perform moſt *ſtrange and aſtoniſhing things*, *may* " *convey men through the air*, *or throw a mountain two* " *miles at a caſt*; becauſe their natural powers may " ſuffice for ſuch purpoſes*:" in what, beſides words, does he differ from thoſe who allow them the ability of performing real miracles? If he will not call any effect a true miracle, which might be produced by the natural powers of created intelligences; we can never determine what is truly miraculous, without firſt knowing

* See p. 99, 100, 108, 109, 113, 114, of his moſt ingenious *Eſſay upon Miracles*; to which the public is indebted for many excellent reflections upon this ſubject; notwithſtanding the dangerous conceſſions which he has here made to his adverſaries.

knowing the extent of the abilities of all created agents *. If they can remove a mountain; who ſhall ſay, that they cannot remove the earth from its orbit? And if they can go ſo far; why may they not remove the ſun from its centre? It can never be affirmed concerning this (nor perhaps concerning any other) miraculous effect, that it neceſſarily argues the higheſt poſſible degrees, or a ſtrict *infinity* of power; ſuch as cannot be exceeded. Much leſs can it be proved, that no inviſible power which is not infinite, could ſupport a human body on the water, or raiſe it into the air; which nevertheleſs are real and evident miracles, becauſe contrary to the known and uſual courſe of nature.

" But *evil ſpirits*," it is ſaid, " have not only the " power of working the like wonders, which *good* " *ſpirits* do, but alſo another, which *good ſpirits* will " never make uſe of; that is, by deluſion and deceit " to imitate thoſe true miracles, which none but God " himſelf can really effect." " The devil," it is ſaid, " can deceive the ſenſes of mankind, or place falſe " appearances before them, ſo as to make them be- " lieve, ſuch works are really performed as exceed " the power of all created agents." Thoſe who hold this language do not duly conſider, that ſuch a deception of the human ſenſes would be itſelf a miracle; a miracle multiplied according to the number and different organs of the ſpectators; and which muſt have the ſame effect upon them, as if the work, however miraculous, was truly and really performed.

For

* Contrary to what is proved, ſect. i. p. 12.

For how could they diſtinguiſh, when an outward miracle is performed, and when it is that their own ſight only is altered? Could they forbear doubting equally concerning all miracles, nay, concerning all the objects of ſenſe, if they once firmly believed that their ſenſes, the only judges of them, were liable to be thus deceived? If the deluſion of Satan conſiſts, not in affecting the organs of ſight, but in placing falſe appearances before them, ſuch as are perfect imitations of divine miracles; this is liable to the very ſame objections as the former. To be able to make things appear what they are not, and to impoſe upon the ſpectators beyond their capacity of detecting the cheat, would be equivalent to a power of performing the greateſt miracles.

It will now, perhaps, be inquired,—" If miracles " are neither the effects of natural cauſes; nor of " ſuperior created intelligences, acting from themſelves alone; and if it cannot be proved, that they " do univerſally and neceſſarily require the exertion " of infinite power; to what cauſe are they to be " aſcribed?" I anſwer, they are always to be aſcribed to *a divine interpoſition:* by which I mean, that they are never wrought, but either immediately by God himſelf, or by ſuch other beings as he commiſſions and empowers to perform them. Miracles may not require a degree of power abſolutely *incommunicable* to any created agent; and yet God may never *actually communicate* a miraculous power to any creature, or do it only where he directly authorizes its uſe. Now, whether God works the miracles himſelf alone, or whether he enables and commiſſions others

others to work them; there is equally a divine interpoſition. And in either caſe every purpoſe of religion will be ſecured: for whatever God authorizes and empowers another to do, is, in effect, done by God; and is as manifeſtly a declaration of his will, as what he does immediately himſelf. He can no more authorize another to act, than he can himſelf act, in oppoſition to his own nature, or in confirmation of impoſture.

The point, then, which I ſhall undertake to eſtabliſh, is this, "that miracles are the peculiar works "of God, or ſuch as can never be effected without "*a divine interpoſition*," in the ſenſe of the phraſe already explained. This point we ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh both by reaſon and revelation. And ſhould we ſucceed in this attempt, there will then be no difficulty in ſhewing, that miracles are, in themſelves, certain proofs of the divinity of the miſſion and doctrine of the performer, and the moſt effectual methods of recommending him to the regard of mankind.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

ARGUMENTS FROM REASON, TO PROVE THAT MIRACLES ARE NEVER EFFECTED WITHOUT A DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

MIRACLES, conſidered as means of conviction, or as proofs of an extraordinary divine revelation, pre-ſuppoſe an ability of judging, whether God be the author of them, and they can be fitly regarded as his immediate declaration and teſtimony in favour of their performer. The appeal in this caſe is plainly made to *natural reaſon;* which muſt firſt be ſatisfied with the *evidence* of any ſupernatural revelation, before we acknowledge its *authority*, or ſubmit to any of its *deciſions*. And, therefore, before we examine the ſenſe of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations, with regard to the authority of miracles; we will conſider what may be advanced from REASON, to prove that they can never be performed without the immediate interpoſition of God.

We ſhall begin with examining the idea which reaſon teaches us to form of ſuperior created intelligences: and in the next place, endeavour to ſhew, that the ſuppoſition of their power to work miracles is contrary to fact and experience: and laſtly, point out ſome of the numerous abſurdities, which would follow from their poſſeſſing a miraculous power.

SECT. I.

The same arguments which prove the existence of superior created intelligences, do much more strongly conclude against their acting out of their proper sphere. The objection from their spiritual and invisible nature, answered.

WE are far from denying, that there are in the universe beings of a higher order than mankind, such as surpass us far both in natural and moral excellencies. All that we here undertake to shew, is, that reason is so far from clearly informing us of the power of any superior beings, besides God, to work miracles; that the best arguments it can employ, to prove the existence of creatures of a higher order than man, do much more more strongly prove, that they can act only within a certain limited sphere. Those arguments are chiefly the two following.

1*st*; From the *diversity* of creatures, and the *gradual ascent* from the lowest to the highest order of existence, observable here on earth; it has been inferred, that the scale of beings is continued upwards above man, and that there are numberless species of creatures superior to him, as we know there are of such as are inferior to him. "Is it not very unlikely," we are asked, "that the gradation of being should stop just at man, the lowest order of reasonable creatures? Is the immense space between man and the Deity quite empty, at the same time that there is not the least chasm between man and

" and nothing?" In anſwer to this reaſoning*, I obſerve,

Firſt, That it has not, perhaps, all that force in it, which its having been uncontroverted might lead us to ſuppoſe. We may allow, indeed, that the *infinite number* of living beings with which the earth is ſtocked, affords ground to conclude, that the other regions of the univerſe are equally furniſhed with inhabitants, adapted to their reſpective ſituations. We may allow farther, that the *gradation* of being from lower to higher, which we obſerve in *our* ſyſtem, furniſhes a proof, that the like gradation obtains in *other* ſyſtems, and that their inhabitants differ from one another in degrees of excellence, and riſe one above another in beautiful order. But whether they riſe *above us* in perfection, the argument from analogy alone, as I apprehend, cannot determine. For that only enables us to judge, by God's manner of acting in one caſe, how he will act in another; and of what we do not ſee and know of his ways, by what we do. But all that we obſerve in the ſyſtem to which we belong, is an innumerable variety, and a gradation of beings. By the rule of analogy therefore ſome ſimilar œconomy may take place in other ſyſtems, and

* It is hardly neceſſary to take notice of the great impropriety there would be in ſuppoſing, that the chaſm between man and his maker can poſſibly be filled up. Were the chain of intelligence continued upwards from man, through as many orders of created beings as you can imagine; yet the uppermoſt link of this chain would be at an infinite diſtance from the throne of God.

they may contain numberleſs orders of creatures riſing one above another till we come to the higheſt of them *. Beyond this, the argument from analogy will not carry us, ſuppoſing it to carry us ſo far †.

Secondly, Let us however ſuppoſe, that the ſcale of beings in our planet is a concluſive proof, not only of a like gradation of being elſewhere, but alſo of there

* This may likewiſe ſerve as an anſwer to another objection. From the cloſe *connexion* between the different orders of beings in our ſyſtem, and *their mutual dependence;* it has been inferred by ſome, that we may be equally related to and dependent upon the inhabitants of ſome other ſyſtem. All that the argument from analogy proves, is, that in each ſyſtem of the univerſe, the different orders of creatures are or may be dependent on each other: but it does not prove, that the inhabitants of one ſyſtem have a dependence on thoſe of another: for of this we have no example. Beſides, if the argument from analogy proved a *mutual* dependence between the inhabitants of different ſyſtems; it would conclude as ſtrongly in favour of the dependence of the inhabitants of other ſyſtems upon us, as of our dependence upon them. There may be a relation between all thoſe numberleſs worlds, and ſyſtems of worlds, of which the univerſe is compoſed, as between various parts of one ſtupendous whole: but the point that ſtill wants to be proved, is, that the inhabitants of other ſyſtems and worlds have more power over us, than we have over them.

† Thoſe who have ſo often made uſe of the argument from analogy on the point in queſtion, will perhaps have a leſs opinion of its force, if they conſider farther, that in another view it militates againſt their own principles: for were this argument concluſive, it would prove, that inaſmuch as our ſyſtem is inhabited by *corporeal* intelligent creatures, other ſyſtems are ſo likewiſe; and thus lead them to deny a world of *ſpirits*.

there being in the univerſe creatures as much ſuperior to man, as man is to the meaneſt reptile: ſtill the ſame kind of reaſoning which proves there are ſuch beings, proves at the ſame time, that they have a certain limited ſphere of action appointed them by God. For how various ſoever the powers of different ſpecies of creatures here on earth may be; they are all under particular laws, and have bounds circumſcribed to their activity, which they are not able to tranſgreſs. The rule of analogy teaches us to conclude the ſame concerning all other beings. If we may judge of the conduct of Providence in unknown inſtances, by thoſe which fall under our obſervation; "HE, who has ſet "bounds to the ſea, which it cannot paſs, and ſays "to its proud waves, Hitherto ſhall ye come, but no "farther *," has bounded the power, and fixed the ſtate, of all the creatures which he hath made, not excepting thoſe of the nobleſt order. And therefore whatever their natural powers may be, and however freely they may be allowed to uſe them; they are limited and determined to ſuch purpoſes as God has appointed, and cannot poſſibly be extended beyond the ſphere aſſigned them by the Creator. And yet no ſooner is it proved, (or thought to be ſo) that probably there are, in *ſome* portion of the univerſe, beings ſuperior to man; than it ſeems to be taken for granted, that they have the liberty of an unbounded range over the whole creation, that their influence extends over this earthly globe in particular, and that

* Job xxxviii. 11. Jerem. v. 22.

they ſtand in the ſame relation to man, as man himſelf does to inferior creatures. But though there be a ſtrict connexion between the different orders of creatures on this earth, who all belong to the ſame ſyſtem; yet none of them have any poſſible communication from this lower world with the inhabitants of different ſyſtems; none of them are able to traverſe the univerſe, or to paſs the bounds of their proper dwelling. And this muſt be the caſe in other ſyſtems, ſuppoſing them to be regulated by the ſame laws which take place in our own. Their inhabitants may have larger capacities than mankind, and a wider province aſſigned them; and yet have no more power over us, than we have over them; they may have no communication with us, nor any influence beyond the limits of their own globe.

2dly; If we wave the argument from what is called the ſcale of being, and appeal to the unbounded power and goodneſs of God, or to the aſtoniſhing magnificence of the univerſe, in proof of the exiſtence of creatures of a higher order than man: ſtill theſe arguments, however concluſive, will not prove, that they are not under the continual government and controul of God, or that they have not all their proper department. For not to alledge, that the power and goodneſs of God, though ſtrictly infinite, and though they have (without doubt) diſplayed themſelves in the production of more noble orders of beings than mankind; are not, however, exerted to the utmoſt in every, or in *any*, ſingle effect; it is certain, they are never exerciſed but under the direction of unerring wiſdom, by which all things are framed in the moſt

exact proportions: and as to the univerſe, it is no leſs diſtinguiſhed by its perfect order and harmony, than by its grandeur and extent. To what purpoſe then is it to plead, that we know not what degrees of power God may have communicated to created beings? Can it be ſhewn, that they are ſubject to no laws, that their influence is unconfined, and reaches to all the ſyſtems of the univerſe?

But it is the opinion of a juſtly celebrated writer *, that to deny created ſpirits the *natural* power of working miracles, is ſaying, "they have no power naturally to do any thing at all." He had before explained his meaning more fully, in the following terms †: "Suppoſing (which is very unreaſonable to ſuppoſe) that the natural powers of the higheſt angels were no greater than the natural powers of men; yet ſince thereby an angel would be enabled to do all that inviſibly, which a man can do viſibly; he would even, on this ſuppoſition, be naturally able to do numberleſs things, which we ſhould eſteem the greateſt of miracles ‡." Angels, according

* Dr. Clarke's ſermons, vol. ii. p. 700. fol. ed. or his Boyle's lectures on the Truth and Certainty of the Chriſtian Revelation, prop. 14.

† P. 697.

‡ The doctor does not confine this reaſoning to *good* angels, but extends it to *evil* ones, p. 699. "If the *devil* has any natural power of doing any thing at all, even but ſo much as the meaneſt of men; and be not reſtrained by God from exerciſing that natural power; it is evident he will be able, by reaſon of his inviſibility, to work *true and real miracles*."

The

cording to this learned writer, could not be equal to men in dignity and power, much leſs ſuperior to them; nor could they even poſſeſs any power at all; unleſs they are able to work miracles upon this earthly globe: and nothing ſeems to him more unreaſonable, than to deny angels the power of doing all which a man can do; which alone, he acknowledges, would be equivalent to a power of performing the greateſt miracles, on account of the inviſible manner of their operation. This reaſoning proceeds upon theſe two principles, that ſuperior natures have the *ſame ſphere of action* aſſigned them with thoſe inferior to them; and that they enjoy the very *ſame powers and privileges*. The former of theſe is deſtitute of proof, and the latter is contradicted by the wiſe order and œconomy of Providence. Has man the ſtrength or ſwiftneſs of brute animals? Can he fly in the air, or dive into the ocean? How much ſoever man may excel the brutes, he has not the ſame organs and powers of action; and his operations muſt therefore be quite different from theirs. The ſame may be true of *angels* compared with men. Their capacities may be more noble

The ancients alſo, as well as our learned moderns, built their opinion of the vaſt powers of demons, upon the ſubtlety and fineneſs of their make, and their *ſpiritual nature*. Tertullian in particular, after ſpeaking of their power to inflict diſeaſes upon mens *bodies*, and to cauſe a ſudden diſtraction of *ſoul*, adds, "Suppetit illis ad utramque ſubſtantiam hominis adeundam "ſubtilitas et tenuitas ſua. Multum ſpiritalibus viribus licet "ut inviſibiles in effectu potius quam in actu ſuo appareant." Apol. c. 22.

ble than ours; and they may move in a much more exalted ſphere, without being able to do every thing which man is capable of doing.

It is a point that hitherto has rather been taken for granted, than proved, that a power of moving matter is eſſential to all ſpiritual beings. It is difficult to diſcern any neceſſary connexion between their immateriality and a power over matter *. If they are not united

* The late ingenious Dr. Iſaac Watts, in the 6th of his *Philoſophical Eſſays on various ſubjects*, (p. 132. 1ſt edit. 8vo.) attempts to ſhew, that though the almighty ſpirit who called the material univerſe into exiſtence, can put the ſeveral parts of it into motion as he pleaſes, no created ſpirit has any innate power in itſelf to move any part of matter; that the world of *bodies*, and the world of *minds*, are ſo entirely different and ſeparate in their whole nature, ſubſtance, and ſpecial properties, that they cannot poſſibly have any communication with each other, except by a particular appointment of God. Spirits being void of all ſolidity, cannot move matter by *impulſe*, becauſe there can be no contact. Nor can they (without a divine commiſſion) excite motion in bodies by *volition*, there being no natural connexion between their volition and the motion of material beings. The power which the human ſpirit has over its own body, (and thereby over other portions of matter,) is no proof that a ſpirit has in itſelf a native power to move matter indefinitely: for the human ſpirit, by all its volitions, can move only thoſe particular parts of the body which God has ſubjected to voluntary motion, and for which proper muſcles are provided, together with the nervous powers which are neceſſary to move thoſe muſcular parts. This limitation of its power ſhews, that it is not eſſential to its nature, but owing to the ſpecial ordination and conſtitution of God, who by uniting ſuch a body to ſuch a ſpirit, has given to man that degree of power over matter which he poſſeſſes. It does not therefore appear, that

united to ſuch organized ſyſtems of matter, as the ſpirit of man is; upon what grounds ſhall we aſcribe to them, that capacity for human actions and enjoyments, which is the ſole effect of our union to thoſe particular ſyſtems of matter? As reaſonably may we ſuppoſe, that light and darkneſs dwell together; or that cauſes the moſt oppoſite to each other, ſhould all produce the ſame effects; as that *ſpiritual* beings ſhould have the ſame natural powers with *corporeal* ones. To the abſurdity of this principle, we may add its tendency to countenance the moſt flagrant immorality. That *polluted* intercourſe which was thought to be carried on between the human race and celeſtial beings *, of which we read in the lying legends of

that any immaterial created ſpirit can operate upon matter, unleſs firſt united to a body. Whether there are any created ſpirits who are entirely unembodied, I do not here enquire: all I mean, is to ſhew, that their being *ſpirits* does not prove their power of acting upon matter, and of working miracles.

* We learn from *Socrates*, (apud *Platon. Cratyl.*) that the *heroes* (who, in the Pagan theology, are ranked next after demons,) "were all of them born from Love, either of a god "with a mortal woman, or of mortal men with goddeſſes." Dionyſius Halicarnaſſenſis, (Ant. Rom. l. 1. c. 77. p. 61. ed. Oxon.) after relating the rape of Ilia, explains more fully this doctrine of the Pagans. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, endeavoured to approach as near as poſſible to Paganiſm; for Joſephus ſpeaks of *the angels of God mixing with women, and begetting a moſt wicked offspring*, Antiq. l. 1. c. 4. The ſame opinion was alſo embraced by Philo. And what is yet more to be lamented, many *Chriſtian* writers, Juſtin Martyr, (Apol. 1. p. 10 & 33. ed. Thirlbii.) Tertullian, (Apol. c. 22.) Athenagoras,

of Jewiſh rabbis, and Gentile poets and philoſophers, gained credit upon the pretence, (and was indeed no unnatural conſequence from it), that ſuperior beings poſſeſs the ſame powers with mankind, and could at pleaſure aſſume a human form. This maxim has ſerved as a cover for the luſt of mankind, in Popiſh as well as pagan countries; though, perhaps, it was at firſt invented to ſupport the credit of a falſe theology. What the heathen prieſts once incorporated into their religion, that the philoſophers undertook to juſtify. And too many Chriſtians (in the true ſpirit of the Jews before them) have ever been more fond of the fouleſt dregs of Paganiſm, than of that holy religion which came down from heaven.

If we ſet aſide the wild fables of antiquity, (however dignified with the pompous title of *philoſophy*,) and form our judgment of ſuperior beings by the ſober rule of analogy; we ſhall be under no temptation *to reduce the natural powers of created beings to a low degree;* (a liberty which a learned writer* is pleaſed

ras, Clemens Alexandrinus, Cyprian and others, maintained that demons, in the ſhape of the heathen gods, had commerce with women, and defiled boys; and they endeavoured to father theſe ſentiments upon a paſſage of ſacred ſcripture, Gen. vi. 2. I would not take notice of a circumſtance which reflects no ſmall diſhonour upon ſo many of the primitive Chriſtians, did it not appear to be a matter of great importance to be continually recollected, that when they embraced Chriſtianity, they, at the ſame time, defiled it with the groſſeſt doctrines of Paganiſm.

* Dr. Clarke's Serm. Vol. 2. p. 697.

pleaſed to allow us :) the conſideration of their poſſeſſing powers ſuperior to mankind, will not create any proof, or even the loweſt degree of preſumption, that they have any power over this earthly globe, or are capable of diſturbing the laws by which it is governed. Reaſon does indeed make known to us one almighty, omnipreſent Being, who is at liberty to act every where, and in what manner he pleaſes; and his omnipotence is the only adequate cauſe, we are capable of diſcovering in the whole compaſs of exiſtence, of thoſe effects which are called miraculous: to him therefore it is moſt natural to aſcribe them. With regard to all other beings, it is not pretended that they exiſt neceſſarily; and that it is impoſſible for them to be excluded from any place, or confined to any: they may therefore, nay, they muſt have ſome limits circumſcribed to their agency. The very ſame kind of reaſoning which is thought to prove their exiſtence, does much more clearly ſhew, that all their powers are bounded, and their ſtation fixed by their omnipotent creator, and that they cannot act beyond their proper ſphere. Should it be ſaid, "That allowing that "ſuperior created beings have only a limited ſphere "of action aſſigned them; yet how does it appear, "that this lower world itſelf is not their appointed "ſphere, and that they have not a power of interpoſing to work miracles upon this earthly globe?" The anſwer will be contained in the following ſection.

SECT.

SECT. II.

The ſuppoſition of the power of any created agents to work miracles of themſelves in this lower world, is contradicted by the obſervation and experience of all ages: there being, in fact, no proper evidence of the truth of any miracles, but ſuch as may fitly be aſcribed to the Deity. The objection, that God may lay created ſpirits under a general, but not an univerſal reſtraint, conſidered.

THIS being a queſtion *of fact;* it is manifeſtly incumbent upon thoſe who affirm, that miracles have been performed by evil beings acting without the order of God, to produce the facts upon which they chuſe to reſt their cauſe, and to eſtabliſh them by an evidence which cannot be overturned *.

In the mean time, if we conſult *our own obſervation and experience;* we find that God governs the world by fixed and eſtabliſhed laws. The more we improve in the knowledge of nature, the more regular does it appear in all its productions. Even the minuteſt parts of it obey the laws of God as conſtantly as the moſt magnificent bodies in the firmament, and co-operate with

* To prevent miſtakes, it may not be improper to obſerve, that it is not here intended to prove, that no ſuperior beings ſtand in any relation to our ſyſtem, or that they never operate within its limits in a manner imperceptible by the human ſenſes; but merely that they do not interpoſe ſenſibly, and in a miraculous manner. We are not ſo well acquainted with the regulations of the *ſpiritual*, as with thoſe of the *material* world.

with them in their proper ſphere for the preſervation and benefit of the whole. And this regularity of the courſe of nature is an argument, that it is not diſturbed by any miraculous interpoſitions. Now if evil ſpirits do not work miracles *at preſent;* why ſhould we believe they *ever* have? Indeed, our not having *ſeen* any miracles ourſelves, is a ſufficient reaſon for rejecting thoſe that are *reported* by others; unleſs it can be ſhewn, that they were expedient in the times and places, in which they are ſaid to have been performed, to anſwer ſome extraordinary purpoſes of divine providence; or that they are attended by an evidence of their certainty, ſuperior to the natural preſumption of their falſehood, and to the proofs which ſatisfy us with regard to the common events of life.

But this is far from being the caſe, with regard to the generality of thoſe miracles which are related in *hiſtory*. Amongſt them all, we ſhall find none which on any account deſerve credit; except ſuch as in their nature, intention, and circumſtances, are worthy of God; and which therefore, allowing their reality, may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have him for their author. Of this kind are the miracles of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations. But we are here inquiring into the reality of ſuch miracles, as are thought to have been performed by ſome evil agent. With regard to theſe; ſuch of them as are beſt ſupported, have been ſeverally weighed in the balance of reaſon, and been found wanting *. It has been ſhewn,

* Cicero in his ſecond book of *divination*, (in which he confutes the arguments advanced in favour of it in the firſt,) and Fontenelle

ſhewn, that they are deſtitute of every eſſential character of truth, and bear all the diſtinguiſhing features of *human impoſtures;* that they are trifling, ludicrous and abſurd in their own nature; or deſtitute of all rational intention, and manifeſtly calculated to anſwer ſome low or worldly purpoſe; that they are related by incompetent witneſſes, againſt whoſe ſkill and integrity there are the ſtrongeſt exceptions; and that they never gained credit amongſt any, but thoſe whoſe ignorance and ſuperſtition expoſed them to the groſſeſt deluſions *. In all thoſe caſes in which the facts cannot be denied, their miraculous nature may juſtly be called in queſtion. The ancient prodigies, ſuch of them, I mean, as were not mere fictions, were natural accidents, interpreted arbitrarily, and which

Fontenelle in his *Hiſtory of Oracles*, (which is an elegant abridgement of Vandale's larger work on the ſame ſubject;) have ſufficiently diſcredited the ſeveral modes of Pagan *prophecy*. And Dr. Douglaſs in his *Criterion*, and many other excellent writers, have very ſucceſsfully expoſed the falſehood of the beſt atteſted *miracles*, both amongſt Papiſts and Pagans.

* Some learned perſons, ſenſible that the devil does not manifeſt a miraculous power in all countries and in all ages, though they imagine he ſometimes does; maintain, "that the world of "ſpirits may undergo many variations, and be ſubject to different "reſtraints and regulations in different ages, ſo as to interfere "more or leſs or not at all in human affairs." Dr Taylor's ſcheme of Scripture-Divinity, p. 266. But theſe (ſuppoſed) revolutions in the world of ſpirits, correſpond to the known and certain revolutions of learning and ſcience here on earth. Now whether is it moſt reaſonable to believe, that human knowledge contracts, and human ignorance and credulity enlarge, the empire of

which created terror only as their cauſes were unknown. It is merely in thoſe ages and countries in which nature was little underſtood, that prodigies have abounded. Laſtly, Very many caſes ſuppoſed miraculous, may be reſolved by conſidering how nature and art may have acted in conjunction *. In a word, all the facts appealed to, in proof of the miraculous agency of evil ſpirits, are either *not ſupernatural*, or *not real*. I will not deſcend into particulars, that I may not repeat what has been ſo well urged by others; but only add a few general obſervations, which ſeem to affect the credit of all thoſe miracles, which, in caſe they had been really performed, could not have God for their author.

1*ſt*; None have ever yet attempted to ſhew, that any of the miracles in queſtion, are ſupported by an evidence ſuperior to the natural improbability or abſurdity of the facts themſelves. How far they are improbable or abſurd, will appear from what occurs in the ſequel. In the mean time all muſt admit, that the more improbable any fact is, the more unexceptionable

of ſpirits who belong to the other world; or, that it is not their real *power*, but mens *belief* concerning it, which is thus affected by the progreſs or declenſion of human knowledge? What Livy ſays of the prodigies which were reported to have happened at Rome at a particular period, is applicable to demoniacal miracles: "Prodigia eo anno multa nuntiata ſunt, "quæ quo magis credebant ſimplices ac religioſi homines, eo "plura nuntiabantur." Lib. 24. c. 10.

* The curious may find this obſervation very well illuſtrated in Dr. Hutchinſon on Witchcraft.

tionable ſhould the evidence be by which it is ſupported: and if it be abſurd, no teſtimony in favour of it can be worthy of credit.

2*dly;* It is univerſally allowed, that *moſt* of theſe miracles were the mere effects of human artifice and fraud. Now, if *moſt* were ſo, why not *all?* The principles upon which all men condemn ſo large a *part*, if carried to their juſt extent, would oblige them to condemn the *whole*. At leaſt, it muſt be allowed to be incumbent on thoſe who make a diſtinction, to point out the difference between thoſe demoniacal miracles which they reject, and thoſe which they receive: a taſk which they have hitherto prudently declined *.

3*dly;* The reaſon aſſigned for not allowing all of them to be human frauds, viz. "Leſt, if out of ſo ma-" ny facts alledged, none of them are true, we ſhould " deſtroy the credit of all human teſtimony, even " that upon which the miracles of Scripture are " built;" is both inconcluſive in itſelf, and diſhon-

D ourable

* We might add, that the behaviour of the perſons, who are thought to have performed miracles and delivered oracles by the aſſiſtance of evil ſpirits, is exactly ſuch as agrees with the ſuppoſition of their being deſtitute of that aſſiſtance, and having no other dependence than human artifice and fraud. Now if their miracles were real, why did they always act as if they had been fictitious? Why were not the works performed in ſuch a manner, as clearly to manifeſt the interpoſition of ſome ſuperior being? And why did the conductors of the ancient oracles, in order to maintain their credit, take ſuch pains to procure early and univerſal intelligence, if ſecret, diſtant, and future events were ſupernaturally revealed? See Lucian's Alexand. ſeu Pſeudomant.

ourable to true religion. Notwithſtanding theſe, and ten thouſand other inſtances of the deceitfulneſs of human teſtimony; yet has it ever been allowed and found, under proper circumſtances, to be a very ſafe and reaſonable ground of reliance. The numerous frauds of every kind which have obtained in the world, are a ground of caution, not of univerſal ſcepticiſm. Though many miracles have been forged, it will not from thence follow, that no real miracles have ever been performed. Nay, "how can we ac- "count for a practice ſo univerſal of forging mira- "cles for the ſupport of falſe religions, if on ſome "occaſions they had not actually been wrought for "the confirmation of a true one? Or how is it "poſſible, that ſo many ſpurious copies ſhould paſs "upon the world, without ſome genuine original "from which they were drawn; whoſe known exiſt- "ence and tried ſucceſs might give an appearance of "probability to the counterfeit*?" It would be unreaſonable, either to receive or reject all miracles alike; in caſe there be a juſt diſtinction between ſome and others. Now the miracles of Scripture are more credible in their own nature than any others, being performed for ends of the higheſt importance, ſuch as are ſuitable to the character of an infinitely perfect Being, and which could not be accompliſhed in any other method. Their truth is confirmed, by witneſſes of the moſt unſuſpected credit; by the public revolutions

* Dr. Middleton's Prefatory Diſcourſe to a letter from Rome, p. 86—88.

revolutions and events which they produced, (ſuch as the converſion of the world to the Chriſtian faith *,) and which cannot poſſibly be accounted for, but upon the ſuppoſition of their truth; by the clear prophecies delivered by the authors of theſe works, of the completion of which diſtant ages are witneſſes; and by a variety of other arguments peculiar to theſe miracles, and which ſerve to detect and expoſe the falſehood of all others. Thoſe ſeem to me but ill to conſult the credit of the Goſpel miracles, who place them on a level with groſs impoſtures, inſtead of pointing out the wide difference between them; and who have no other way of ſupporting the Chriſtian faith, than by countenancing lies and popular errors, which in all ages has created the ſtrongeſt prejudice againſt it, and given occaſion to boundleſs ſuſpicions †.

4*thly*; Many even of thoſe miracles, which of all others ſeemed to have the faireſt pretenſions to credit, have been *undeniably proved* to be mere impoſtures. Amongſt theſe I reckon many of the miracles of

 popery,

* The miracles of Chriſtianity confirmed a doctrine contrary to mens ſtrongeſt prejudices, and could not be believed without danger: other miracles, for the moſt part, cannot be rejected without danger, and are deſigned to eſtabliſh popular and profitable errors.

† "Dum per mendacium tenditur, ut fides doceatur, id "demum agitur, ut nulli habetur fides." St. Auguſt. ad Conſentium.

popery *, and thoſe of witchcraft †, both of them atteſted upon oath by pretended eye-witneſſes, and the latter examined into with all the accuracy and authority of a court of juſtice, and yet both afterwards found to be the offspring of fraud and deluſion. Amongſt all thoſe which have eſcaped detection, there is no ground to preſume, that there is one either more credible in itſelf, or more ſtrongly atteſted, than thoſe in which the impoſture has been diſcovered. And therefore, without troubling ourſelves to account for every particular relation; is there not the higheſt reaſon to believe, that, had they all been equally ſubject to examination, and undergone a rigorous inquiry, the impoſture muſt have been diſcovered in all?

Now, if there be no ſufficient reaſon to believe, that any ſuperior ſpirits acting without the order of God, have ever, from the beginning of the world to this day, performed a ſingle miracle upon our earthly globe; how void of all foundation, muſt be the aſcribing to them a miraculous power? Were they poſſeſſed of ſuch a power, it is natural to ſuppoſe they would have exerted it *frequently*; eſpecially as it may be ſo eaſily made ſubſervient to the purpoſes of malevolence and impiety? What miſeries of every kind might not wicked ſpirits, from a principle of envy and hatred, introduce amongſt mankind? And if good

* Several remarkable conceſſions of Papiſts themſelves upon this head, are cited below, ch. 3. ſect. 4. art. 5.

† See Hutchinſon on Witchcraft, ch. 1.

good ſpirits enjoyed an equal liberty of doing good offices to men; what a theatre of contention would our globe have been between ſpirits of ſuch oppoſite diſpoſitions and deſigns? And therefore, if in a long ſucceſſion of ages, there has been no appearance of any ſuch conteſt between virtuous and wicked ſpirits; if no motives whatever have excited the one or the other to exert a miraculous power, ſo much as *once*; is it not a natural inference, that they do not poſſeſs it? With regard to God, indeed; reaſon informs us, that he who eſtabliſhed the courſe of nature, can change it at pleaſure, even whether he has already done ſo or not. But the caſe is different as to other beings, whoſe powers and operations are only to be known (in a natural way) by obſervation and experience. God is manifeſt in every part of nature; but who can point out the effects of other ſpirits, and their operations on the univerſe? And if we ſee no effects of their agency on this earthly globe, if no ſuch effects have ever been ſeen; there can be no ground from reaſon to aſcribe it to them. It is as repugnant to the obſervation and experience of all ages, to aſcribe to evil ſpirits a miraculous power, as it is to aſcribe life to the inanimate, or ſpeech to the brute creation.

To deſtroy the force of this argument, ſome have pleaded, "that ſuperior created intelligences, evil as "well as good, do not want the *natural power* of "working miracles, but only the *liberty* of exerting "it: and notwithſtanding they may be reſtrained "from uſing it *frequently* or *commonly*; yet that it

" can never be proved, (as a great * writer expreſſes " it) that they are under ſuch reſtraints, *univerſally*, " *perpetually*, and *without exception*." There is evidently, I acknowledge, a real difference between *having the power* of performing miracles or of producing any other effects, and the actual *exerciſe* of that power; and thoſe perſons may have the power, who do not exerciſe it, provided their not exerciſing it be the matter of their own choice. But I ſcarce underſtand the propriety of repreſenting any perſons as having a power, which they are *reſtrained* from exerciſing by others. As far as they loſe their *liberty* of exerting it, their *power* is abridged. The malefactor confined in a dungeon, and the ſlave chained to a galley, by loſing the liberty, loſes the power of going beyond the limits of his dungeon, and the length of his chain. Not, however, to inſiſt upon this; I would obſerve, in anſwer to this objection, Firſt, That were the Deity to lay ſuperior beings under ſuch a *general reſtraint* as is here ſuppoſed; the removal of that reſtraint, and the ſetting them at liberty on any *particular occaſion*, on purpoſe that they might work particular miracles, and with no other view; would be giving them more than a bare *permiſſion*, (as ſome repreſent it;) it would be giving them both *a power* and *a commiſſion* to perform thoſe particular miracles on that ſpecial occaſion. The miraculous works in this caſe could not be conſidered in the ſame light as the ordinary actions of free agents, to whom God indulges

* Dr. Clarke, V. 2. p. 697. fol. ed.

dulges the uſe of their natural powers; but would argue a ſpecial licence, and even the expreſs appointment of the Deity. Now, we are not contending, that God may not commiſſion and empower whom he pleaſes to work miracles; this being, in effect, the ſame thing as performing them himſelf. And he can never give his ſanction to impoſture. So that the objection we are conſidering, were it well grounded, can never ſerve the main cauſe of thoſe by whom it is urged, or enable them to ſhew that miracles may accompany a falſe doctrine. Secondly, There is, however, no manner of foundation for the objection. For our judgments are to be guided by facts, not by arbitrary hypotheſes: and therefore, unleſs it can be ſhewn, that there is full and ſufficient evidence of the truth of ſome miracles, which cannot fitly be aſcribed to God; there is juſt the ſame reaſon to believe, that ſuperior created intelligences are *univerſally* and *perpetually* reſtrained from working miracles, as that they are *generally* ſo. The very ſame obſervation and experience which convince us that there are any laws of nature at all, demonſtrate that thoſe laws are univerſally and invariably executed. Thirdly, The objection proceeds upon a ſuppoſition not only groundleſs, but abſurd: it ſuppoſes, that God communicates and continues to his creatures, powers which he has hitherto, through an unknown length of ages paſt, almoſt totally reſtrained them from exerting, and which he will equally reſtrain them from exerting through all future generations. Indeed, as it cannot be ſhewn, that he has *in any ſingle inſtance hitherto* permitted, ſo there is all imaginable reaſon to believe he never will

hereafter in any ſingle inſtance permit, them to exerciſe that miraculous power which they are ſuppoſed to poſſeſs. And can there be a ſtronger reflection upon the wiſdom of God, than to maintain that he conſtantly denies his creatures the uſe of thoſe natural powers which he beſtows and preſerves? He has indeed fixed the bounds, beyond which they cannot act; nevertheleſs, it is a flagrant contradiction to all that we know of the works of God, to ſuppoſe that within thoſe bounds they are not allowed freely to exert themſelves. And therefore what ſome are pleaſed to call a *reſtraint upon the liberty* of ſuperior beings, is more properly a *natural inability* of working miracles *; and the argument againſt their poſſeſſing a miraculous power, from their never having made uſe of it, remains in its full force.

To what purpoſe is it to plead, "that we do not "know the *other* world?" We are not unacquainted with *this*, to which the preſent inquiry refers. In the foregoing ſection we have endeavoured to ſhew, that if we reaſon from analogy, and that view which we are able to take of the works of God; the various orders of beings ſuperior to the human kind *act only within a certain limited ſphere.* And if what we have advanced farther in the preſent ſection be juſt, *this lower*

* If this reaſoning appears to any to be inconcluſive, my main argument will not be affected: for that equally holds good, whether God by *a perpetual law reſtrains* all inviſible agents from interpoſing at any time to alter the regular courſe of things in this lower world; or whether they *want a natural power* of interpoſing for any ſuch purpoſe.

lower world is not their appointed ſphere of action; and conſequently they are prevented from working miracles by the very law of their nature, without a ſpecial divine aſſiſtance and commiſſion. Now, if there are no other beings capable of performing miracles; to whom ſhall we aſcribe them but to God? Upon this principle, they muſt be conſidered as the immediate operation of the divine power.

SECT. III.

The laws of nature being ordained by God, and eſſential to the order and happineſs of the world; it is impoſſible God ſhould delegate to any of his creatures a power of working miracles, by which thoſe divine eſtabliſhments may be ſuperſeded and controuled.

BY the laws of nature, I do not mean thoſe laws to which ſuperior inviſible agents are ſubjected, but the rules by which this viſible world is governed, and more eſpecially the uſual courſe and order of things in the ſyſtem to which we belong *. When miracles are performed, theſe laws are ſuperſeded, and may be ſuſpended and controuled. I am here to ſhew, that the idea of miracles, as contradictions to the laws and courſe of nature, contains a proof of their never being performed without the immediate agency or order of the ſovereign Author and Lord of nature. Conſider the deſign of theſe laws, and

* See ch. 1. ſect. 1. p. 3.

and the authority by which they were enacted. The laws of nature were at firſt ordained, and are continually preſerved by God; they are the rules by which he exerciſes his dominion over the world. His wiſdom did not, and indeed could not, ſee fit to leave the world without laws; or (which would have been much the ſame thing) leave thoſe laws to be controuled at the will of his creatures, to the ſtrict and conſtant obſervance of which we owe, the regularity and uniformity of the natural world; the ſettled order of cauſes and effects in the moral; and the continued harmony of the univerſe, all the parts of which are related to each other, and conſpire together to carry on one common deſign, and thus demonſtrate that all things are under the ſteady and conſtant direction of *one* ruling counſel. Nothing gives ſo much force to the argument from the natural world in favour of true theiſm, or enables us ſo effectually to anſwer the principal objections againſt it, as the ſtability and invariable permanency of the courſe of nature. The conſtancy of it conſtitutes its beauty. And what would be the conſequence of God's departing from the rules which he has ſettled in the world, but the violation and diſparagement of his own majeſty and wiſdom, and the perplexity, confuſion and diſtreſs of his creatures, inſtead of that order which now reigns every where? If God did not govern the world by ſteady meaſures *, no room would be given

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* See above, ch. 1. ſect. 2. p. 12. and Berkley's Treatiſe concerning the principles of human knowledge, part 1. ſect. 31, 151.

us for the exertion and improvement of our faculties, nor any aſſiſtance afforded us for the direction of our conduct; a grown man would no more know how to manage himſelf in the affairs of life, than an infant juſt born: which one conſideration abundantly over-balances whatever particular inconveniences may thence ariſe. The laws of nature being ordained for the general good, are not violated or ſuperſeded even by the great ruler of the world himſelf, to prevent partial evil, or on any occaſion whatever, unleſs when the moſt important ends of his government neceſſarily require a miraculous interpoſition. What probability then is there, that any other beings ſhould be able to diſpoſe of the laws of nature, and interrupt them at their pleaſure, or (which is the ſame thing) prevent them from producing their uſual effects? Nay, there ſeems to be a neceſſity, that natural cauſes ſhould operate in the moſt uniform and ſteady manner. For were God to grant to ſuperior beings, ſome of them good, others evil, all of them finite and imperfect, a power of working miracles at pleaſure, ſuch as might ſuperſede and controul the operation of nature; there could be no law of nature, no ſettlement or fixed conſtitution of things at all; every appointment of God for our benefit might be defeated, and the order of this lower world be deſtroyed. If ſpirits, according to the doctrine of the Platonic philoſophers, are naturally able to move matter, or any particular parts of it, not only in our ſyſtem, but in every other throughout the univerſe; what a boundleſs empire would they enjoy? and with what extenſive deſolation might they overſpread the face of the whole creation?

tion? But is it credible, that God has subjected the universe to the power of every single spirit superior to mankind, however malignant in his disposition? The order * of the world seems to make it necessary, that all created agents should be effectually restrained or disabled from disturbing that order, in the manner they might do, did they possess the power of miracles. And there must be a divine law or constitution, preventing the interposition of superior beings in this manner upon our earthly globe in particular. Unable as we might have been to determine by speculative reasonings, or arguments *a priori*, what constitution of the universe it became God to establish; yet we may discern the wisdom, the fitness, and in some degree the necessity, of that constitution which we see he has actually established, and consequently the impossibility of its being subjected to the arbitrary will of any of his creatures, from whose dominion and controul we find it in fact to be exempted. The laws which the wisdom of God ordained for the general good, his omnipotence carries into certain execution, without the least danger of being checked or controuled by any opposing power. Hence arises the impossibility of miracles being ever performed without the

* Should it be here objected, that the order of the world does not forbid *rare* and *occasional*, but only *frequent* and *common* disturbances of the course of nature: I answer, that we have already proved, ch. 2. sect. 2. p. 54. that there is no foundation for this distinction, as it respects superior created agents, who appear to be not only *generally*, but *universally* restrained from working miracles.

the order of God. Not that the works themſelves, abſtractedly conſidered, require the exertion of an infinite power *; but the courſe of nature being a divine ſettlement, it cannot, in any inſtance whatever, be overturned by any finite power, without God's expreſs appointment. This is affirming nothing more, than that there is no being in the univerſe capable of oppoſing the Deity with ſucceſs.

The moſt eminent philoſophers and divines have maintained, that the law of nature is not only the *ordinance*, but the *operation* of God, and denotes the rule by which his energy is unceaſingly exerted in the government of the world; and that natural effects are as much the operation of God as even miracles themſelves. This doctrine is ſtrenuouſly maintained by Dr. Clarke in particular, in many of his writings †. And

* See above, ch. 1. ſect. 3. p. 28—30.

† Sermons, V. 1. p. 620, 621. V. 2. p. 287, 296, 297, 697, 698, fol. ed. In ſome of the paſſages here referred to, I acknowledge, the Doctor, in ſpeaking of God's acting upon matter continually and every moment, diſtinguiſhes between his doing it *immediately by himſelf*, and his doing it *mediately by ſome created intelligent beings*; and the latter ſeems to him moſt probable. On this ſuppoſition, indeed, it might be as eaſy for created intelligences to *alter*, as to *continue* the courſe of nature. But if matter be (as this very eminent philoſopher affirms) incapable of any *powers* whatſoever; excepting only this one *negative power*, that every part of it will, of itſelf, always and neceſſarily continue in that ſtate, whether of reſt or motion, wherein it at preſent is: and if all thoſe things which we commonly ſay are the effects of the *natural powers of matter*, are the effects of ſome intelligent being's acting upon matter continually

And therefore, if his doctrine be true, by contending for the power of evil spirits to work miracles; does he not contend for their power to suspend and controul the operations of divine omnipotence? But whether you consider the course of nature as the regular and continued operation of God, or as his constitution only, and the fixed rule and plan of his government; it cannot be controuled at any time, but by the same authority by which it was at first *established*, and is continually *preserved*. And consequently miracles, which supersede the laws of nature and providence, and display a sovereign dominion over them, do not only most naturally bespeak, but necessarily argue, the immediate interposition and authority of the Lord of nature, the omnipotent creator and governor of the world, who reigns without any rival. If it be true in fact, that God governs the world by general laws, and

nually and every moment: to whom is it so reasonable to ascribe this universal and perpetual agency on matter, and every particle of it, throughout the unbounded universe, as to the eternal and omnipresent Deity? We are sure that matter cannot resist the unremitted and almighty energy of his sovereign will, who only speaks, and it is done; who commands, and it stands fast for ever. But how does it appear, that created spirits have any power to move matter of themselves, and without the special commission of God? (See above, ch. 2. sect. 1. p. 41.) And is it not more reasonable to believe, that the Deity maintains his sovereignty in a more immediate manner over his own world, and those laws of motion on which its order depends; than that he has subjected them to the inclinations and volition of any of his creatures, who are necessarily finite and imperfect?

and it be neceſſary that he ſhould do ſo; he has not delegated, he cannot delegate, to any of his creatures any power over them. To do this, would be to reſign the reigns of government. But the neceſſity of God's preſerving the laws of nature inviolate, will more fully appear, as we proceed in conſidering the farther abſurdities which attend the contrary doctrine.

SECT. IV.

The aſcribing to any ſuperior beings, beſides God, and thoſe immediately commiſſioned by him, the power of working miracles, ſubverts the foundation of natural piety, and is a fruitful ſource of idolatry and ſuperſtition.

IT is evident, that prior to all ſupernatural revelation, we have no other way of knowing God, than by the works of nature. From theſe we infer the exiſtence, and attributes, and providence of their almighty Author: principles which are the baſis both of all religion, and of all our happineſs. But if ſuperior beings acting without the order of God, can work miracles; ſhall we not loſe our proof of the exiſtence and perfections of God from the works of nature? For ſome miracles, ſuch as turning inanimate rods into living beings, and raiſing the dead, are ſo perfectly ſimilar to the works of creation, and the original gift of life, as not eaſily to be diſtinguiſhed from them; and afford juſt reaſon to conclude, that any of the authors of ſuch miracles might be the creators of the world: which would leave it doubtful, to whom

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we were indebted for our exiſtence, amongſt the numerous beings equally capable of conferring upon us that important favour *.

If others beſides God could change the order of nature; what evidence ſhould we have of his wiſdom and providence in the continual government of the world? For this evidence ariſes from that regularity and uniformity, which we obſerve in the courſe of nature, proceeding on from age to age without interruption. Could others change the order of nature, even when acting in oppoſition to nature's Lord; what reaſon would there be to fear, that there were other gods in the univerſe beſides him, ſuch as were independent upon him, and as oppoſite to him in their natures and deſigns, as they were in their operations? Nay, on this ſuppoſition, there would be juſt ground to apprehend, that he who had given laws to nature, had himſelf a *ſuperior* lord, who could controul his appointments, and ſubvert his empire.

Even if it could be proved upon the principles of our adverſaries, that the author of nature had no ſuperior or equal, and that it was by his permiſſion that others ſhared with him the government of the world; this alone would be deſtructive to all true piety. If the

* Even without ſuch an inducement as miracles, many amongſt the heathens have aſcribed the creation of ſerpents and other noxious animals, and even of the whole viſible world, to an evil being, in oppoſition to the divine intention. Nay, ſome learned advocates of the Chriſtian revelation, in this enlightened age, ſeem to think, that inviſible beings may be poſſeſſed of powers equal to the making and governing of worlds.

the courſe of nature be not under the ſole direction of God; what foundation can there be for our worſhip of God alone, and for the continual exerciſes of gratitude and ſubmiſſion to him, in every condition? If we believe, that other inviſible beings can interpoſe in our affairs at their own pleaſure, and either inflict puniſhments or beſtow bleſſings upon us, ſuch as are quite out of the ordinary courſe of nature, and contrary to it; could we conſider ourſelves as under the protection and government of God? Would it not be natural and unavoidable for us, to pay homage to thoſe who had the diſpoſal of our lot, and, by all the means which we judged ſuitable to that end, to engage their favour, and avert their diſpleaſure? It was this belief of the power of demons, to diſpenſe both good and evil to mankind, that was the foundation of that worſhip which was paid them in the Pagan world. And had they given proof of their power; it would have been unreaſonable to deny them worſhip *. To fear or hope without any grounds, is very abſurd: but to fear or hope where there is juſt reaſon for either, where there is real power either to protect or puniſh us, is an evident dictate of the underſtanding. The paſſions of hope and fear do indeed neceſſarily ariſe in the human mind, upon the contemplation of a power, that may be employed either for our benefit or prejudice; and will ever be accompanied with a ſuitable concern to

* See below, ch. 2. ſect. 5. p. 77.

render that power propitious to us *. Concerning the Jews themſelves, even after their return from their captivity at Babylon, when they are generally ſuppoſed to be entirely cured of their fondneſs for idolatry, we are told, that on the day of expiation they offered a goat to *Sammael* or *Satan*, that he might not accuſe them of their crimes before God, becauſe they believed him to have the power of doing it †.

With regard to Chriſtians, it is in words, chiefly, that many of them differ from the ancient Pagans, who deified the ſuppoſed principle of evil. If they refuſe the devil the name of God, they go very far in allowing him the attributes and prerogatives of God-head. They conceive of him as a kind of omnipreſent

* It ſeems very reaſonable to infer from hence, that no miracles were ever performed amongſt the Pagans, except by the meſſengers of the true God, with the expreſs and declared intention of manifeſting and diſtinguiſhing him from the falſe: for without this precaution, the Pagans would naturally have referred theſe works (had any ſuch been wrought amongſt them) to their own gods, conſidered them as new diſplays of their divinity, and been engaged to worſhip them with new zeal and ardour. This is evident from the conduct of the idolatrous Lycaonians, who, before they were better inſtructed by St. Paul, concluded from the miracle he performed upon the cripple, that the gods were come down in the likeneſs of men, and proceeded without delay to perform the rites of adoration. Acts xiv. 8—18.

† See Buxtorf's Chald. Talmud. & Rab. Lexicon, on the word *Sammael*, p. 1495, and Bochart's Hierozoic. l. 2. c. 54. p. 652.

nipreſent and omniſcient ſpirit *; and aſcribe to him ſuch a dominion over the human race as can belong to none but the ſovereign of the univerſe. To the devil they aſcribe froſts, and tempeſts, and infectious air, blights upon the fruits of the earth, the diſeaſes of cattle, the diſaſters and diſtempers of mens bodies, phrenſy and the alienation of their minds, and the power of inflicting even cruel deaths †. This error has begotten amongſt Chriſtians, though not an idolatrous worſhip, yet endleſs and cruel ſuperſtitions ‡, particularly witchcraft, which alone has occaſioned a vaſt effuſion of human blood; as the records of every country can witneſs. No leſs than nine hundred witches have in ſome very ſmall provinces been put to death in the ſpace of a few years ||. Nevertheleſs, the grand principle upon which this deteſtable art is built, viz. "the natural power of the devil to de-"ſtroy mens bodies and lives, to bring upon them "innumerable other calamities, and to work mira-

 "cles,

* Tertullian. Apol. c. 22.

† Tertullian. Apol. c. 22. & de anim. c. 57. and Dr. Macnight's Truth of the Goſpel Hiſtory, p. 172, 173. Dr. Whitby on Luke xii. 16. Heb. ii. 14. Joſephus de B. I. l. 7. c. 25. and Tobit vi. 7. ch. viii. 2. ch. iii. 8.

‡ We hence ſee, with how little reaſon it is affirmed, that inaſmuch as we are liable to evils, it can make no difference to whom they are aſcribed. Beſides, did the evils we ſuffer proceed from the power and pleaſure of evil ſpirits; why are they not greater and more numerous?

|| Mead's Medica Sacra, præfat. p. 11, 12.

" cles *," is ſtill maintained by the greateſt names in the republic of learning. On this foundation, laid for him by philoſophy, the wizzard eaſily raiſes his own ſuperſtructure. While the philoſopher aſſerts the power of wicked ſpirits to produce the moſt extraordinary effects, out of the common courſe of nature; the wizzard preſumes, and not unreaſonably, that they have the *uſe* of this power: for a power which they cannot uſe, is, in effect, no power at all. And he advances only one ſtep farther, when he pretends to a familiar intercourſe with them, or to be ſkilled in the manner of ſetting them to work. Now this difference between them is very trifling; ſince, if the devil can interpoſe in the manner ſuppoſed by both, it matters not whether he does it with, or without the inſtrumentality of human beings. Moſt melancholy is it to reflect, how much the general principle we are here oppoſing, viz. the power of Satan to work miracles, and the various ſuperſtitions grounded upon it; have contributed in all ages, and in all nations, to the diſquiet and corruption of the human race, and to the extinction of rational piety. This conſideration alone, were there no other, ſhould check the zeal of Chriſtians to maintain an opinion, ſo deſtructive to our virtue and happineſs; and which the wiſeſt heathens, from principles of benevolence and piety, earneſtly wiſhed and laboured to extirpate †.

In

* Dr. Clarke's Serm. V. 2. p. 700, folio.

† Superſtitio fuſa per gentes, oppreſſit omnium fere animos, atque hominum imbecillitatem occupavit.—Multum enim & nobiſmet

In a word, if we entertain juſt and honourable ſentiments of the conſtitution of the univerſe, and its all-wiſe and benevolent author; can we believe that he has ſubjected us to the pleaſure and diſpoſal of ſuperior beings, many of whom are ſuppoſed to be as capricious and malevolent as they are powerful? Has God put our very life, and the whole happineſs of it, into ſuch hands? This ſome maintain he has done; and this he muſt have done, if he has granted them the power of working miracles at pleaſure: an opinion, which cannot fail to rivet Heathens in their idolatry, and Chriſtians in the moſt deteſtable ſuperſtitions.

SECT. V.

If miracles were performed in favour of falſe doctrines; mankind would be expoſed to frequent and unavoidable deluſion.

MIRACLES may be conſidered either apart by themſelves, or in their relation * to the miſſion and doctrines of a prophet. It is in the former view, that they have been conſidered in the preceding ſections of this chapter: we ſhall now examine them in the latter; which will furniſh us with new evidence of their being works peculiar to God. What I ſhall

 attempt

nobiſmet ipſis, & noſtris profuturi videbamur, ſi eam funditus ſuſtuliſſemus. *Cicero de divinat.* l. 2. c. 72.

* What circumſtances are neceſſary to point out this relation, is particularly ſhewn below, ch. 5. at the beginning.

attempt in this ſection, is to ſhew, that were evil ſpirits at liberty to work miracles to impoſe upon mankind, the error might be abſolutely invincible. In proof of this aſſertion, I appeal to the *natural ſenſe* of mankind concerning miracles, and to thoſe impreſſions which they always make upon the mind, when free from the bias of prejudice.

It is certainly more natural, to refer miracles to God, than to any other inviſible being: for reaſon informs us clearly and certainly, that God can, but does not equally inform us that any other being can, perform theſe works *. And inaſmuch as the courſe of nature is a divine conſtitution, it muſt be unnatural to ſuppoſe, that any being, beſides God, is at liberty to controul it †. Accordingly it appears in fact, that mankind conſider miracles as the works of God, and as divine teſtimonials to a prophet, whenever they are performed and appealed to as ſuch. This is evident, not only from the immediate regard ‡ which has been ſhewn to genuine miracles, whenever they have been wrought; but alſo from the frequent pretenſions to them, in all ages, and in all nations of the world. Had they not been generally conſidered as divine works, and authentic proofs of a divine miſſion; they would not have been forged in ſupport of every falſe religion that pretended to come from God.

Nay,

* Ch. 2. ſect. 2.

† Ch. 2. ſect. 3.

‡ 1 Kings xvii. 24. ch. xviii. 39. John iii. 2. Mat. xv. 30, 31. ch. ix. 8. Luke xiii. 13, 17. Acts iii. 10. ch. iv. 31. ch. xiv. 11.

Nay, ſo ſtrong an impreſſion of their own divinity do genuine miracles leave upon the human mind, that their force is felt even by thoſe, whoſe natural ſentiments concerning them are moſt perverted by the errors of ſuperſtition, and the refinements of learning. It is ſtrongly felt by the whole Chriſtian world, notwithſtanding their ſpeculative opinions are calculated to defeat it *; and not leſs by infidels and atheiſts, who never think themſelves ſafe in rejecting religion, till they have perſuaded themſelves, that every hiſtory of miracles is falſe. Spinoza himſelf, as Mr. Bayle † aſſures us, ſaid to his friends, "That if he could be "convinced of the reſurrection of Lazarus, he would "break his whole ſyſtem into pieces, and readily em-"brace the common faith of Chriſtians." The very Phariſees, when moſt blinded and hardened by their malice againſt Chriſt, confeſſed the force of this evidence in his favour, when they ſaid, "This man "does many miracles. If we let him thus alone, "all men will believe on him ‡." And indeed the whole world would have believed on him on account of his miracles, had they not been prejudiced againſt his doctrine. I add, that Chriſtians muſt allow, that miracles, when performed in atteſtation of a profeſſed miſſion from God, conſtitute an evidence adapted to the frame of the human mind, and the genuine ſentiments of nature; for both our Saviour and his apoſ-

* Preface.

† General Dictionary, article Spinoza, note R.

‡ John xi. 47, 48.

tles contented themſelves with the mere exhibition of this evidence, and then left it to produce its proper effect.

Now, if miracles, by their own natural influence, are calculated to procure immediate credit to the doctrine they atteſt; if they conſtitute an evidence adapted to the common ſenſe and feelings of mankind; if they make an impreſſion which ſcarce any reſiſtance can totally prevent or efface: it is an eaſy and obvious inference from hence, that if they were performed in favour of falſe doctrines, the generality of mankind would be neceſſarily expoſed to frequent deluſion. And thoſe would be the leaſt able to reſiſt the impreſſion of miracles, who had the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of God upon their minds, the moſt honourable apprehenſions of his natural and moral government, and were the moſt fearful of incurring his diſpleaſure, by rejecting any revelation of his will.

Here it will be objected, "That if miracles were "wrought to confirm falſehood, the nature of the "*doctrine* might ſerve to guard us againſt being de- "ceived, and direct us to aſcribe the works to ſome "evil agent, who was *permitted* to perform them for "the *trial* of mankind." In anſwer to this objection, it might perhaps be ſufficient to obſerve, that what ſome call God's *permitting*, would be in reality *empowering* and *commiſſioning* evil ſpirits to work miracles. For God's removal of the reſtraint or diſability which thoſe ſpirits are under at all other times, amounts to his giving them both a power and a commiſſion to work miracles on this particular occaſion*.

And

* See above, ch. 2. ſect. 2. 54.

And this God cannot do in confirmation of falſehood.

But much ſtreſs being laid on this objection, we will offer ſome farther obſervations upon it. The moſt arbitrary and unnatural ſuppoſitions, when they have been long made, are thought at laſt to have ſome foundation to ſupport them, and require the ſame notice to be taken of them as if they had. It is not true in fact *, that any miracles have ever been performed in ſupport of error, on purpoſe to try our faith. At leaſt, no ſufficient evidence appears of the truth of any ſuch miracles. Nor do the ends of the divine government ſeem to require, that mankind ſhould be expoſed to this particular trial. The temptations which occur in the ordinary courſe of providence, are abundantly ſufficient to exerciſe our virtue; and it is quite needleſs that miracles ſhould be wrought, merely to put it to a farther proof. Now, if reaſon cannot ſhew, that mankind *ought to be*, and experience convinces us that they never *have been*, expoſed to the deluſion of falſe doctrines inforced by miracles; the notion that they may be ſo, muſt be conſidered as a mere fiction. Beſides, how unlike would ſuch a trial be to thoſe ordained by God? The latter ariſe from paſſions planted in our nature for the moſt valuable purpoſes, and from the moſt uſeful and neceſſary relations of life. But our adverſaries ſuppoſe, miracles may be atchieved with no other view, than as *mere* matter of trial to mankind: which is repugnant to all our knowledge of

* See ch. 2. ſect. 2.

of the divine diſpenſations. Not to obſerve, that errors inforced by miracles, would, very frequently at leaſt, conſtitute a trial rather of the underſtanding, than of the heart; and in this reſpect likewiſe, it would differ from thoſe to which God has ſubjected mankind.

To convince us more fully, that no miracles can ever accompany a falſe doctrine, merely for the trial of mankind; I would obſerve, that they are not capable of anſwering this end, upon the principles of thoſe by whom it is aſſigned. Were a falſe doctrine to be atteſted by miracles; it muſt be aſſerted, either that the falſhood of it was diſcerned, or that it was not. If the falſhood of the doctrine was diſcerned, and it was at the ſame time known, that the miracles atteſting it might and muſt be performed by ſome evil agent: in this caſe, where would be the trial? The miracles, it would be allowed, were no evidence of the truth or divinity of the doctrine; and contained no recommendation of it, or motive to embrace it; nay, they could only ſerve to furniſh an invincible prejudice againſt it, on account of the known malevolence of their author. If, on the other hand, the falſehood of the doctrine was not and could not be diſcerned; the miracles attending it being conſidered only as proofs of the interpoſition of ſome ſuperior being, the mind muſt be thrown into a ſtate of perplexity and ſuſpence about the author of the works, and remain void of all inducement either to embrace or reject the doctrine. And conſequently here alſo there would be no trial at all. We are never more in danger of charging God fooliſhly, than when

when we judge of him, not by what he has done, but by what we preſume it becomes him to do. It might convince us, how little a way bare ſpeculation can carry us in all reſearches into the nature and government of God, to find the ſtrongeſt minds, when truſting to ſpeculation alone, aſcribing to him unworthy meaſures, and inventing deſigns and ends for them, which they are not adapted to anſwer. The very ſcheme which aſſigns the trial of mankind, as the end of God's permitting miracles to be performed in confirmation of error, does itſelf ſhew, it could not be promoted by them. Now, whoever calls upon us to believe, that miracles may be wrought without any neceſſity, and even without any uſe, demands our aſſent to what contradicts all our ideas of divine wiſdom, and the whole courſe of the divine diſpenſations, as well as the ſeveral reaſons before urged to ſhew, that no variations from the eſtabliſhed laws of nature can take place, except when they are indiſpenſably neceſſary to promote the moſt important purpoſes of God's adminiſtration.

Though miracles wrought in ſupport of error, according to the idea ſome have formed of theſe works, would not conſtitute any trial of mankind; yet, if we conſider them in their true light, they carry ſo much weight and authority with them, as moſt powerfully and effectually to recommend to the belief of mankind the doctrine which they atteſt. And, conſequently, were they to accompany error, they could not fail, in very many inſtances, of procuring it credit; as we endeavoured to ſhew at the beginning of the ſection. In order to confirm what was there advanced, it is only

only neceſſary to add, that, in this caſe, the conſideration of the *doctrine* which the miracles atteſted, could not univerſally ſecure men from deception. Man is a creature liable to error, and his judgment (eaſily impoſed upon by ſpecious appearances) often pronounces that to be reaſonable which is not ſo. And even when a doctrine appears doubtful, or ſtrongly ſuſpicious, mankind are more ready to call in queſtion their own reaſonings concerning it, than to diſpute the authority of the miracles which are thought to recommend it. Innumerable caſes there are, in which human reaſon, in its moſt improved ſtate, is unable to form any judgment concerning the probability or improbability of a divine interpoſition to confirm particular doctrines. Do not the moſt learned, and even the wiſeſt of mankind, differ widely concerning the reaſonableneſs of certain opinions? Nay, what contrary cenſures do they paſs upon them? Is there a ſect of Chriſtians which does not repreſent the diſtinguiſhing tenets of all the other ſects as unworthy of God, however credible they appear to thoſe who hold them? How then can the bulk of mankind, the moſt ignorant and illiterate, and thoſe in particular who have been educated in all the darkneſs of idolatry; how can they in every caſe judge with certainty, whether a doctrine be worthy a divine interpoſition, or detect the falſehood of it, when it brings the teſtimonial of miracles?

Let us put a caſe the moſt favourable of any to thoſe whom we here oppoſe. They affirm, "That "if the moſt numerous and illuſtrious miracles were "performed in ſupport of idolatry, we ought to diſ-

"regard

" regard them; that the doctrine being falſe, the " works could not be divine." Let us then ſuppoſe, that ſuch miracles were actually wrought for the purpoſe here aſſigned, the confirmation of *idolatry*, in the ſenſe they imagine it to have been practiſed by many in the Pagan world, that is, in confirmation of the worſhip of certain powerful beings, to whom the government of particular parts of nature was delegated by the ſupreme Divinity. From what was obſerved above *, it appears, that had miracles been performed among the Heathens, theſe works muſt, by their own natural influence, have inflamed their devotion towards the reputed authors of them. And in farther juſtification of their idolatry, they might be ready to plead, " That the honour paid to inferior deities was " warranted by the miracles which they performed; " becauſe ſuch changes in the order of nature could " not take place, but by the appointment of the great " Lord of nature; and becauſe they were in themſelves diſplays of that authority and dominion over " mankind with which he he had inveſted them: " and conſequently that diſowning their authority, " and refuſing them their due homage, was acting " contrary to the will of the ſupreme Being, and to " the truth of things; refuſing to ackowledge thoſe " inferior deities to be, what they really were, our " divinely appointed governors and guardians." If a Heathen offered this plea, the validity of which, or of one very ſimilar to it, ſeems to be admitted in Scripture;

* Ch. 2. ſect. 4. p. 65.

Scripture*; it would be difficult to convince him of the weakneſs of it, eſpecially as it gave a ſanction to all his ſtrongeſt prejudices and inclinations †. Now if in a caſe thought to be ſo plain, and certainly of the firſt importance, mankind are liable to deluſion; in how many thouſand inſtances beſides would they not be open to it, if miracles were performed to give a ſanction to impoſture?

And even ſuppoſing the doctrine atteſted by miracles, to be immoral, or favourable to our corrupt paſſions; this conſideration would indeed awaken the caution and prejudice of a few good men againſt it, but would only ſo much the more ſtrongly recommend it to the affection of the greateſt part of mankind. When I conſider upon what accounts the Heathen world did not like to retain the true God in their knowledge, what vices they aſcribed to their chief divinities, what flagrant immoralities they practiſed as rites of religion, even without any ſuch ſanction as that of miracles: when I farther reflect, how often the moral precepts of the Goſpel have been cenſured as impracticable, and their ſtrict purity urged as an objection againſt their divinity; and that even Chriſtians themſelves, of all denominations, are continually corrupting the ſanctity of their religion, or relaxing its rigour, and ſtriving, under different pretences, to bring it nearer to the level of human frailty:

* Iſ. xli. 21—23. cited below, ch. 3. ſect. 2.

† What is here offered to ſhew, that miracles would have rivetted *Pagans* in their idolatry; is apparently true with reſpect to *Papiſts*, were ſuch works to be performed by them.

ty: I cannot help being of opinion, that a doctrine mild and gentle to mens favourite paſſions and purſuits, if it was ſupported by miracles, would be a temptation too ſtrong for human nature to reſiſt, and ſuch as God therefore will never ſuffer it to be expoſed to.

A very learned writer, who has done ſingular ſervice to the cauſe of religion, has aſſerted, "Suppoſ-
"ing that the miracles pretended in favour of Pa-
"ganiſm were all real miracles, yet as they lead men
"to a corrupt religion and idolatrous worſhip, no
"reverence, no regard is to be paid to them.*" The worſhip which men pay to God, will ever be ſuitable to the ideas they form concerning his nature. The moſt immoral rites of Pagan devotion were conformable to the character of the objects of that devotion. And while men entertain corrupt notions of their gods, they are not likely to diſcern the abſurdity of a corrupt religion. And therefore miracles performed in ſupport of it, would ſtrengthen, and (in their opinion, at leaſt) juſtify their attachment to it. In a word, whoever conſiders the true nature of miracles, the power which they neceſſarily imply, and the forcible impreſſions they make on the human heart, together with the real character of mankind, will hardly deny, that, if they were wrought to give evidence to falſehood, they would unavoidably, in numberleſs inſtances, procure it credit; eſpecially if he farther takes

* Dr. Newton's Diſſertations on the Prophecies, V. 2. p. 275. Dr. Clarke likewiſe had advanced the ſame doctrine, V. 2. p. 699, 700, 702. fol. edit.

takes into the account, the underſtanding and ſagacity aſcribed to created ſpirits. We are indeed expoſed to the danger of deluſion by the artifices of men. Nevertheleſs, againſt human craft, human caution is a ſufficient ſecurity: but men are not a match for ſuperior beings.

Now if God's allowing to evil ſpirits the liberty of working miracles in confirmation of falſe doctrines, would neceſſarily ſubject mankind to great deluſion; will it not follow from hence, that he cannot have granted them any ſuch liberty? This conſequence will be allowed by thoſe, who think honourably of the divine government. Who, without being compelled by ſuch evidence as cannot be reſiſted, would repreſent the Deity as placing his rational creatures, even thoſe who with upright hearts were endeavouring to learn his will, under a diſpenſation, which, without any fault of theirs, would promote their deception, in matters which concerned their moral conduct, and their eternal happineſs? Such a diſpenſation as this ſeems to be utterly inconſiſtent with God's wiſdom and goodneſs, with his eſſential rectitude, and love of righteouſneſs and truth, and with all the nobleſt perfections of his nature. If God *does not*, and indeed, (for the reaſons aſſigned above *,) *cannot*, ſuffer the order of the *natural* world to be diſturbed at the will of created agents at any other time; can it be thought, that he will permit and employ them to make this miraculous diſturbance, merely to promote a farther and much greater evil, the deluſion, depravity

* Ch. 1. ſect. 2. p. 18. & ſect. 3. p. 58.

vity and miſery of the *moral* world? Scarce is it poſſible for us, to diſhonour the deity more, than by ſo groundleſs and injurious an imputation. If falſehood and vice are objects of God's diſapprobation, he muſt have reſerved in his own hands the power of working miracles. Now, it is not more impoſſible, that this prerogative of God ſhould be uſurped by violence; than that it ſhould be voluntarily reſigned and proſtituted to unworthy purpoſes.

SECT. VI.

If miracles may be performed without a divine interpoſition, and in ſupport of falſehood; they cannot be authentic credentials of a divine miſſion, and criterions of truth.

IT is a thing too obvious to require any laboured argument, that if miracles, in themſelves, are evidences only of the interpoſition of ſome ſuperior beings, not of God more than any other; they can never be, in themſelves, a certain criterion of a perſon's being ſent of God. "You could not know I "came from, and was ſent by ſuch a prince, by "my bringing his ſeal along with me, if other "people had the ſame ſeal, and would lend it to o-"thers to uſe as they ſaw fit †." If you cannot point out, with clearneſs and certainty, the ſpecific difference between thoſe miracles which are peculiar to

F God,

† Fleetwood's Eſſay on Miracles, p. 6, 7.

God, and thoſe which the devil can either perform or imitate, you will be in perpetual danger of miſtaking the one for the other *. Accordingly we find Chriſtians themſelves, from the earlieſt ages down to the preſent, diſparaging the evidence of mere miracles, as doubtful and uncertain; cautioning the world againſt receiving doctrines as true and divine, upon the bare atteſtation of theſe works, and cenſuring a faith founded upon them as manifeſtly *raſh and groundleſs* †. Can it then be matter of ſurprize to us, that unbelievers ſhould treat miracles with very little reverence, and except to the evidence ariſing from them? It has long provoked their ſcorn and indignation, to have that offered them as a valid proof of the truth, which equally atteſts falſehood; to ſee the very

* Dr. Prideaux in his letter to the Deiſts, p. 206, and many others have undertaken to ſhew, what ſort of miracles the devil may perform or imitate. The taſk however ſeems to have been too hard for them; which it might well be, if it be true, as Dr. Clarke and others tell us, that there is no knowing how far the power of created ſpirits, good and evil, may extend. Why then do theſe writers undertake to determine the limits of their power? See Dr. Clarke, V. 2. p. 696, &c.

† Temerariam Plane. Tertullian in Marc. 3. 2. Origen, in his anſwer to Celſus, l. 3. p. 124, ſpeaks of prophecies and ſupernatural cures, as things of an indifferent nature. And Jerome, or whoever is the author of the Breviary upon the Pſalter, apud Hieron. T. 2. p. 334, 335, makes no difficulty of allowing to Porphyry, that the magicians of Egypt, Apollonius, and an infinite number of other perſons, wrought miracles. Non eſt autem grande facere ſigna, ſeems to have been the principle common both to Porphyry and Jerome.

very ſame works uſed to recommend ſome to their regard as divine meſſengers, and to diſgrace others as magicians *. For, I think, there is hardly a ſingle miracle, either in the Old or New Teſtament, which Chriſtians ‡ have not thought they could parallel with ſome ſimilar miracle amongſt the Pagans. There are two caſes, however, in which miracles are conſidered as evidences of a divine miſſion, by ſome who plead, that ſuch works may, on other occaſions, be performed without the order of God.

I. It is urged, " that in caſe of a conteſt between " two oppoſite parties working miracles for victory; " the party which works the *moſt* and *greateſt* mira- " cles, may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be aſſiſted by " God; and therefore that his doctrine ſhould be re- " ceived as divine." To this we anſwer, *1ſt*, That if ſupernatural operations were brought to ſupport oppoſite miſſions, it would be difficult to determine which of them required the greater degrees of power. Scarce, perhaps, would any two perſons pronounce the ſame judgment concerning them. *The driving of*

* It was this which afforded Celſus ſuch matter of inſult and triumph, Πῶς ἂν ὁ σχέτλιον, ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν ἔργων τὸν μὲν θεὸν, τὺς δὲ γόητας ἡγεῖθαι. Celſus apud Origin. contra Celſ. l. 2. p. 93. This it is that ſeems to have created the ſtrongeſt prejudice in Mr. Rouſſeau againſt miracles: " Can it be imagined," ſays he, " that God uſes the ſame means to inſtruct men, as he knows " the devil will uſe to deceive them?" Lettres ecrites de la Montagne, p. 104.

‡ This taſk was undertaken by the learned Huetius, in his Quæſtiones Alnetanæ.

the traders out of the temple, is called by St. Jerome *, *the moſt wonderful of all the miracles which Jeſus performed:* and yet a very learned modern † ſcarce allows it to be any miracle at all. To change the *form of a creature*, is pronounced by Dr. Lightfoot ‡ the *greateſt* miracle; and he applies the obſervation to that wrought at Cana: but Dr. Lardner || calls it, "one of the *leaſt* miracles any where aſcribed to "Chriſt." How can miracles of a *different kind* be brought into a compariſon with each other? Were this difficulty overcome, there ſtill remains a greater. For, *2dly;* It would be impoſſible to ſhew, on the principles we are here examining, that thoſe miracles which carried marks of a *ſuperior* power were really *divine*. The moſt learned Dr. Clarke ſeems indeed to have thought §, that where *ſuperior* power appeared, "there it was *neceſſarily* to be believed, that the "commiſſion was truly from God;" and the ingenious and acute Biſhop Sherlock affirms ¶, "that mi-"racles are an immediate and direct proof of what "they are brought to aſſert, the ſupremacy of God: "For, when the ſingle queſtion is, who is the "Mightieſt, muſt it not be decided in his favour "who viſibly exerts the greateſt acts of power?" But

* In Matt. tom. 9. p. 31. ed. Baſ. 1516.

† The miracles of Jeſus vindicated, by Dr. Pearce, p. 26.

‡ V. 1. p. 504.

|| Vindication, p. 26.

§ Serm. Vol. 2. p. 700.

¶ Diſcourſes, V. 1. p. 285.

But if created ſpirits of very different ranks and orders, are at liberty to work miracles without any commiſſion from God; who can determine the limits of their reſpective capacities, and take upon him to ſay, how far the power of the higheſt created ſpirit may extend? Dr. Clarke tells us *, "that (unleſs we knew the limit of *communicable* and *incommunicable* power, we can hardly affirm with any certainty, that *any* particular effect, *how great* or *miraculous ſoever* it may ſeem to us, is beyond the power of all created beings in the univerſe to have produced." I admit, that in caſe of ſuch a conteſt as is ſuppoſed above, the party which performs the moſt and greateſt miracles is *ſuperior* to the oppoſite. But I am not able to diſcern, how this *ſuperiority* of the one to the other neceſſarily proves an *infinity* of power, or an abſolute ſupremacy over all other beings. On the principles of Dr. Clarke, the miracles on both ſides, ſeparately conſidered, *might* be performed by beings inferior to God, and are proofs only of the interpoſition of ſome inviſible agents ſuperior to man. How then can the circumſtance of their being performed in a conteſt for victory, demonſtrate that they could have no other author than God? *3dly;* On the contrary, this circumſtance would incline us to believe, that *both* parties were aſſiſted only by created intelligences, ſuperior to one another in power: for it ſeems much more likely, that there ſhould be a contention for power and ſupremacy between different

* V. 2. p. 697.

created agents, than between any creature and his omnipotent Creator. With whom would the almighty Maker and Sovereign of the univerſe deign to enter into a conteſt? And ſuperior ſpirits, (as Dr. Clarke * himſelf allows) "could not poſſibly be "ſo abſurdly ignorant, as to imagine that finite could "prevail by *force* againſt infinite, or not know that "the Almighty could, if he pleaſed, annihilate them "ſwift as thought." From hence it ſeems to me to follow, that if oppoſite miſſions were ſupported by miracles, the ſupreme Being could have no concern in the diſpute. *4thly;* According to the rule of judging concerning the divinity of miracles, here laid down; theſe works will, at different times, both prove and diſprove the divine commiſſion of their performer. While the conteſt is continued between two oppoſite parties working miracles for victory; he who to-day, by working more and greater miracles than his rival, is received as a divine meſſenger, muſt be rejected as an impoſtor to-morrow, if his rival ſhould then exceed him in the number and greatneſs of his miracles. At the next trial, however, he may exceed his rival, recover the advantage he loſt, and from being an impoſtor, become again a divine meſſenger. How long the conteſt may laſt, none can tell; but every one may ſee, that there can be no force in that proof, which alternately eſtabliſhes and deſtroys oppoſite claims. In ſuch a ſuppoſed conteſt, each of the miracles, in itſelf conſidered; is of no value:

* Sermons, V. 1. p. 60. folio ed. & p. 587.

value: and add as many of theſe ciphers together as you pleaſe, they will be but cyphers ſtill.

II. Thoſe Chriſtians * who are of opinion that miracles may be wrought by inferior beings, do nevertheleſs aſcribe ſuch to God, as are performed for an end not unworthy of him. "Though the works," ſay they, "do neceſſarily prove nothing more than "the interpoſition of ſome ſuperior being; yet the "nature of the *doctrine* will enable us to determine "who that being is: and if the doctrine has a ten- "dency to promote piety and virtue, or be only in- "different in itſelf, and not abſolutely inconſiſtent "with theſe ends; then the miracles, and conſe- "quently the doctrine, muſt be divine: for ſhould God "in ſuch caſes as theſe, permit evil ſpirits to work mi- "racles and impoſe upon men, the error would be ab- "ſolutely invincible; and that would in all reſpects be "the very ſame thing, as if God worked the miracles "to deceive men himſelf." This reaſoning ſeems liable to ſeveral objections. Why ſhould the mere *indifference* of the doctrine engage us to aſcribe the miracles to God, rather than to other ſuperior ſpirits ſuppoſed capable of performing them? Is it not more honourable to the Deity to ſuppoſe, that he will not atteſt a doctrine merely indifferent in itſelf? It is what his wiſdom will not permit. With regard to doctrines of a *moral or uſeful tendency;* it is not in all caſes eaſy for the bulk of mankind, or even for the wiſe and learned, to form a certain judgment con-

 cerning

* Dr. Clarke, Vol. 2. p. 700. Dr. Chandler, and others.

cerning them. What to men appeared to have a tendency to promote virtue and happineſs; ſuperior beings, who diſcerned its remoteſt effects, might know to be a curſe rather than a bleſſing, and give it countenance from a motive of malevolence. On the other hand, a doctrine really ſubſervient to the cauſe of piety and virtue, men might judge to be prejudicial to it. And were the ſanctity of the doctrine ever ſo evident, it would not (on the principles of thoſe with whom we are here arguing) certainly follow from hence, that the miracles recommending it were wrought by God; inaſmuch as other beings, from motives unknown to us, might intereſt themſelves in favour of ſuch a doctrine. Concerning none but the divine Being can it be demonſtrated, that he is abſolutely incapable of deceiving or being deceived. Nor is there any reaſon to plead, "that "if miracles were performed by evil ſpirits in ſup- "port of a doctrine good or innocent, mankind "would be *neceſſarily* deluded into a belief of its di- "vine original:" unleſs it be allowed that miracles bear upon themſelves evident and certain characters of divinity. But thoſe who make this plea, ſuppoſe it to be a thing known and certain, that no miracles whatever do neceſſarily argue a divine interpoſition. Were I to ſee miracles performed in favour of all ſorts of doctrines, I would not aſcribe any of them to God: I ſhould be unable to perſuade myſelf, that infinite wiſdom employed any works as the diſtinguiſhing teſt of his own extraordinary interpoſition, which may be performed by inferior beings; or that the Deity would uſe that as a ſeal of truth, which the devil

devil uſes to gain credit to impoſture. And therefore if miracles may be performed by created agents of different and oppoſite characters, and in ſupport of falſehood as well as truth; I am not able to perceive, how any doctrine can be proved by miracles *, or at leaſt any ſuch doctrine as wants the atteſtation of theſe works.

It is neceſſary to obſerve farther, that the making the doctrine the teſt of the divinity of the miracles, is, to make the doctrine the rule of judging concerning the miracle, not the miracle the rule of judging concerning the doctrine. The proper and immediate deſign of miracles is, to eſtabliſh ſome truth unknown before, and ſuch as is not demonſtrable by reaſon, or capable of other evidence beſides that of miracles; to prove, for example, the miſſion of the prophet by whom they were performed, and the divine

* In confirmation of what is urged above to ſhew, that, on the principle maintained in the objection we are now examining, no doctrine whatever can be proved to come from God by miracles; it may be obſerved, that if the doctrine be ſuch, as natural reaſon can clearly and certainly diſcover to be *true;* the miracles are unneceſſary and ſuperfluous, and for that reaſon cannot be divine. And if the doctrine be ſuch as reaſon can clearly prove to be *falſe;* it will be ſtill more impoſſible to aſcribe the miracles to God. If the doctrine be *doubtful,* and natural reaſon be unable to determine whether it be true or falſe; it muſt be equally doubtful who the author of the miracles is. But it is ſufficient to have ſhewn, that, if miracles are not peculiar to God, no doctrine that wants the atteſtation of theſe works, can be proved by them.

vine original of his meſſage or doctrine, and to engage men to receive and comply with it, however contrary it may be to their prejudices and paſſions. But according to ſome learned men, the doctrine muſt firſt be examined without paſſion or prejudice, and then employed to prove the divinity of the miracles. But is not this repugnant to the proper uſe and intention of miracles? It is making the whole force of the proof, to depend upon the doctrine to be proved. It is of importance to add, that miracles are intended more eſpecially for the conviction of the ignorant and unlearned, who are eaſily impoſed upon by the ſophiſtry of ſcience, and the ſpecious diſguiſes of error, as well as utterly diſqualified to determine by abſtract reaſonings concerning the abſolute neceſſity, or the fitneſs and propriety, of ſpecial divine interpoſitions. It is neceſſary therefore that miracles, when they are offered as evidences of a divine commiſſion, ſhould contain in their own nature, a clear demonſtrative proof of their divine original: for otherwiſe their ſpecial deſign could not be anſwered. It is quite unnatural to ſuppoſe, that the doctrine muſt firſt eſtabliſh the divinity of the miracles, before the miracles can atteſt the divinity of the doctrine; and it is abſurd to expect that a new revelation and offenſive truths, (which are not received without reluctance, even where there is a prior conviction of the divinity of the miracles atteſting them,) ſhould themſelves effectually engage men to aſcribe thoſe works to God, which might be performed by numberleſs other inviſible agents.

Now, can it be imagined, that God will ever allow

ſuperior

ſuperior beings to work miracles in ſupport of falſehood; if hereby he would deſtroy the proof from theſe works of his own immediate interpoſition, and put it out of his own power to employ them as certain credentials of a divine miſſion? Miracles (under which term I comprehend thoſe of *knowledge* as well as *power*) being the *only* * mean, whereby God can aſſure the world of the truth of a new revelation, he muſt have reſerved the uſe of it to himſelf alone, without ever parting with it to ſerve the purpoſes of his rivals and oppoſers.

With regard to the rule, of making miracles then a proof of the divine original of the doctrine, when the works diſplay a *ſuperiority* of power, and when the doctrine is either ſubſervient to, or not inconſiſtent with, piety and virtue; it may be farther obſerved, that were this rule true in general, it could not be applied to the caſe either of Judaiſm or Chriſtianity; if it ſhould appear, that the great founders of both thoſe religions have eſtabliſhed rules directly oppoſite to this, and repreſented miracles as *abſolute*, not as *conditional* proofs of a doctrine's coming from God. And this is the point which comes next under conſideration.

But before we proceed farther, it may not be improper to recapitulate what has been already offered from reaſon, to ſhew that miracles can never be performed without a divine interpoſition. Reaſon, it has been obſerved, makes known to us but one almighty

* See below, ch. 5.

mighty being, who is at liberty to act every where, and in what manner he pleases, and whose omnipotence is the only adequate cause, we are capable of discovering in the whole compass of existence, of those effects which are called miraculous. To him therefore it is most natural to ascribe them. The best arguments which reason can employ to prove the existence of superior created intelligences, do much more strongly prove, that they can act only within that particular sphere appointed them by their Creator. It has likewise been shewn, that the observation and experience of all ages are a full demonstration that they are not at liberty to perform miracles in this lower world; no such works having ever been performed in it, but such as may be fitly ascribed to God. The laws of nature being the established rules of the divine government, and essential to the order and happiness of the world; it seems very unreasonable to suppose, that God should delegate to any of his creatures a power of superseding or controuling these laws. Miracles are samples of dominion over them, and argue the immediate interposition and authority of that great Being by whom they were at first ordained. Deists more especially, who deny the existence both of angels and devils, must allow, that if any miracles are performed, they can have none but God for their author, and that the settled course of things is unalterable but by his immediate will. Were inferior beings at liberty to disturb the wise order of nature, we should lose our best evidence of God's existence and providence; and the very foundation of all the homage he claims would be overturned,

turned. The opinion we are here oppoſing has in all ages been fatal to true piety, and given birth to endleſs ſuperſtitions and idolatries. And did ſuperior beings really poſſeſs the miraculous powers aſcribed to them; the exerciſe of thoſe powers by good and evil agents, would either expoſe mankind to neceſſary and invincible error, or entirely deſtroy the credit and uſe of miracles under the idea of criterions of truth, and authentic credentials of a divine miſſion.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ARGUMENTS FROM REVELATION, TO PROVE THAT MIRACLES ARE, IN THEMSELVES, CERTAIN EVIDENCES OF A DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

IT is neceſſary on this occaſion, to appeal to the ſacred writings; not merely for the conviction of thoſe who acknowledge their divine authority, though they miſtake the meaning of many paſſages relative to our preſent inquiry; but alſo to convince thoſe, who, denying their authority, are ready to avail themſelves of the miſinterpretations of the former, in ſubverting the foundation on which their authority reſts. I will endeavour to ſhew, that the Scriptures both of the Old and New Teſtament (ſtrictly correſponding with right reaſon) always repreſent miracles as the peculiar works of God; and never attribute them to any other beings, unleſs when acting by his immediate commiſſion. The ſubject muſt be conſidered in its full extent; and comprehends under it the following topics, which demand a cloſe and candid examination.

SECT.

SECT. I.

The view which the Scripture gives us of good angels, of the devil and his angels, as alſo of the ſouls of departed men; inconſiſtent with their liberty of working miracles.

I. WITH regard to *good angels;* the Scripture never repreſents them as capable of working miracles at their own pleaſure, or as inveſted with any dominion over mankind. Very frequent mention indeed is made of angels, either as the inſtruments or ſymbols of an extraordinary providence. When Jacob * in a dream ſaw a ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, on which the angels of God ſeemed to aſcend and deſcend, and on the top of which the divine glory itſelf appeared; this viſion, perhaps, was deſigned only as a ſymbol or figurative repreſentation of God's ſpecial care of Jacob, and readineſs to interpoſe at all times for his protection. It is in alluſion to this viſion, that our Saviour expreſſes himſelf, when he foretold to Nathaniel that ſurprizing train of miracles which attended his miniſtry †; "From this time ‡ you ſhall ſee hea-

"ven

* Gen. xxviii. 12.

† John i. 51. That Chriſt here foretels his miracles, and not the viſible aſcent and deſcent of angels upon him during his miniſtry, is evident from hence, that the prophecy was not accompliſhed in this latter ſenſe of it.

‡ Απ' αρτι.

" ven open, and the angels of God afcending and " defcending upon the Son of man." Now, inaf-much as the miracles of Chrift are elfewhere afcribed, not to angels, but to God *; the former cannot be regarded as the proper authors of thefe works; and our Saviour might mean only to affirm, that his miracles would be fenfible difplays of the divine power in his favour, or open proofs of an immediate intercourfe between heaven and earth. We do not however deny, that Chrift might employ angels in executing his orders, and particularly in working miracles: for they are all made fubject to him. Nevertheleſs, it does not appear from the Scriptures, that they can perform miracles of themfelves, and without an immediate divine commiffion. On the contrary, according to the Scripture account of them, if they bring any meffages to men, they firft receive them from God; if they controul the courfe of nature, it is by authority from the Lord of nature; and if they interpofe at all in the affairs of our fyftem, it is not as they fee fit themfelves, but according to the command of God, as the miniſters of his will, which they execute as punctually as thofe paffive inftruments of his providence, the luminaries of heaven, and the elements of nature †. The word, *angel* or *meſſenger*, denotes only one employed in the execution of fome commiffion. Hence it is applied, not merely to intelligent

* See below, fect. 6.

† Pſ. xviii. 9, 10. Pſ. lxviii. 17. Pſ. ciii. 20, 21. Iſ. vi. 1, &c. Dan. vii. 9. Matt. xviii. 10. Heb. i. 14. ch. ii. 5. Rev. v. 13. ch. vii. 11. ch. xix. 10.

telligent beings acting by the order of God, but even to the inanimate parts of the creation, which he employs as the inſtruments of his government. The Pſalmiſt, when celebrating the empire of God over the *material* world, ſays, "He maketh the winds "his angels or meſſengers, and lightnings his mi- "niſters *. For fire and hail, ſnow and vapour, and "ſtormy winds, fulfil God's word †." But all that

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* This is the true rendering of Pſ. civ. 4. (Compare Exod. ix. 23, 24. Pſ. lxxviii. 48, 49.) Nor is it certain, that theſe words are applied Heb. i. 7. to intelligent beings; as the apoſtle ſeems to have had no other view in citing them, than to obſerve, that the very name of *angels* (however applied) imported *miniſtry* and *ſubjection*; whereas that of *Son* implied *authority* and *dominion*. Very probably the Scripture may repreſent the moſt active parts of nature as God's angels, in oppoſition to the Heathens, who conceived of them as deities. See below, ch. iii. ſect. 2.

† Pſ. cxlviii. 8. According to this general import of the word *angel*, many learned writers underſtand it in the following and other paſſages of Scripture. "The angel of the Lord ſmiting Herod," they think is explained in the text itſelf of an *extraordinary diſtemper* inflicted by God, Acts xii. 23. God threatened Sennacherib, "that he would ſend a blaſt upon him," a peſtilential blaſt, or burning wind, which deſtroyed his army; and this being done under the direction of God, and in execution of his deſigns, the blaſt or wind is called the *angel*, the meſſenger and ſervant of God, 2 Kings xii. 6, 7. ch. xix. 35. "God's ſending an angel to Jeruſalem to deſtroy it," ſeems only another form of expreſſion for "his ſending a peſtilence upon Iſrael," 1 Chron. xxi. 14, 15. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16. We read Exod. ix. 23, 24. that the Lord "ſent upon the Egyptians thunder and hail and fire;" and the Pſalmiſt ſpeaking

is of importance here to obſerve, is, that the Scripture teaches us, that angels, of whatever dignity, are only *miniſtring ſpirits*, the ſervants of Jehovah, "doing his commandments, and hearkening to the voice of his word," without having themſelves any power over mankind, or over thoſe laws by which the ſyſtem to which we belong is governed.

II. We are next to enquire, whether the Scripture aſcribes the power of performing miracles to *the devil and his angels*. It is generally ſuppoſed, that theſe wicked ſpirits were originally inhabitants of the celeſtial regions, and equal in rank and dignity with thoſe who preſerved their innocence. Now, ſuppoſing this to be the caſe; yet, if even good angels, who continue in a ſtate of favour with God, have no power of working miracles at their own pleaſure, or any dominion over mankind, (as we endeavoured to ſhew under the preceding article;) what reaſon can there be for aſcribing ſuch dominion and power to evil angels, who are fallen under the divine diſpleaſure? Would the Deity, unchangeable as he is in rectitude and juſtice, reward their diſobedience, by enlarging their

of theſe judgments, ſays, "God ſent evil angels amongſt them." Pſ. lxxviii. 48. 49. See Mr. Lowman's three Tracts, p. 60—74.

On the other hand, it may be alledged, that the ſacred writers ſeem to have thought, that God adminiſtered *a particular providence* by the inſtrumentality of his angels; and conſequently in deſcribing the effects of a ſpecial divine interpoſition, would very naturally make mention of the agency of thoſe miniſtring ſpirits, much in the ſame manner as is done in the paſſages here cited.

their ſphere of action, and advancing them to new dominion over his own creation, ſuch as is denied to the higheſt archangel? Is the latter only *a miniſtring ſpirit*, while the former reign as ſovereigns over nature, as fellow-ſovereigns with the eternal God? The apoſtles * Peter and Jude ſpeak a very different language, when they tell us, that inaſmuch as the angels "did not keep their principality †, but deſerted their "own habitation, God did not ſpare them, but caſt "them down to Tartarus ‡, and (there) reſerves them "in everlaſting (or perpetual) chains, under dark-"neſs, to the judgment of the great day." If Peter and Jude are here ſpeaking of ſuperior ſpirits; it is evident, that even prior to their fall, they did not enjoy the liberty of a boundleſs range, but had a certain limited ſphere of action aſſigned them, or their *proper habitation:* which we have ſhewn to be highly probable from reaſon ‖. And in their preſent ſtate, they are ſubjected to new reſtraints, like priſoners confined for their crimes, in a doleful dungeon, where they remain in ſafe cuſtody, till they are brought forth to an ignominious execution. The place of their confinement is called *Tartarus;* by which ſome underſtand

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.

† Τὴν ἑαυτων ἀρχὴν, Jude 6.

‡ Ταρταρώσας.

‖ Ch. 2. § 1.

a deep gulf under the earth *, and others the *dark air* † near the earth: but whatever place it refers to, they can have no *dominion* there; it is not their *kingdom*, but their *prison*, their *constant* and *perpetual* prison. How inconsistent is this representation of their case, with their sharing with God the empire of the world, and controuling the laws of nature and providence! Nor does the Scripture on any occasion contradict this representation: it never ascribes to the devil the ability of revealing secrets, foretelling future events, or working miracles; never guards mankind against being deceived by the outward effects either of his miraculous power or inspiration; necessary as such a caution would have been, had he been able to inspire prophecies and work miracles; and earnestly as it warns us against a less danger, the pretences of men to divine miracles and inspiration, when they were not sent and assisted by God.

It is, indeed, urged by some ‡, that the Scripture represents evil spirits as "presiding over distinct re-"gions, by the direction of Satan their prince." In proof of this assertion, we are referred to that passage in

* This seems to be the strict import of the word. Homer. Il. 8. l. 13, 14. Hesiod. Theogon. l. 119, 718. Plato in Phædone, p. 399. ed. Ficini. Virg. Æn. 6. l. 577.

† Consult the commentators on 2 Pet. ii. 4. Ephes. ii. 2. ch. vi. 12.

‡ Dr. Doddridge's Fam. Expos. V. i. p. 427. 2d ed. note f. on Luke viii. 31.

in the book of Daniel *, where mention is made of Gabriel's being oppoſed by the princes of the kingdom of Perſia, and of his fighting the prince of Perſia. It is not the deſign of this viſion, to aſſert the preſidency even of good angels, (who at moſt only execute the divine orders;) but to repreſent *the peculiar providence* which God exerciſed over the Jewiſh nation, and his care to fruſtrate the councils of their enemies. As to evil ſpirits, there is here no reference to them. For by the princes of the kingdom of Perſia, the prophet intends the nobles of that kingdom, and eſpecially Cambyſes, the ſon of Cyrus, who, in his father's abſence, ſtopt the execution of his decrees, and forbad the building of the temple †. It is the more reaſonable to underſtand this paſſage, of ſome oppoſition againſt the Jews in the court of Perſia, by the prince and ſome of the nobility; inaſmuch as the prince of Grecia mentioned in the very ſame paſſage, cannot ſo well be referred to an angel or evil ſpirit, as to Alexander the Great, who overturned the empire of Perſia: he and his ſucceſſors being the main ſubject of the following prophecy.

Some learned writers aſcribe to the devil a power "of changing the conſtitution of the air ‡." This element "is ſo wonderfully contrived as at one and "the ſame time to ſupport clouds for rain, to afford "winds for health and traffick, to be proper for the

* Ch. x. 13, 20.

† See the Aſſembly's Annotations in loc.

‡ Dr. Macknight's Truth of the Goſpel Hiſtory, p. 173.

" breath of animals by its ſpring, for cauſing ſounds " by its motion, for tranſmitting light by its tranſ- " parency *." And therefore if the devil can change the conſtitution of this element, on which the material, the vegetable, and the animal creation abſolutely depend; this world is in a ſtate of perfect ſubjection to him; and inſtead of being a priſoner in Tartarus, he is the ſovereign of nature. It has been a prevailing opinion amongſt Chriſtians, that the devil raiſes ſtorms, and lays them; in direct contradiction to the ſacred Scriptures, which repreſent the winds and waves as ſubject to the controul of God alone †, and every change of their natural ſtate as the certain evidence of his peculiar interpoſition, particularly the miraculous ſtorm of thunder and hail in Egypt ‡, the dividing the Red Sea by the rod of Moſes ||, and Chriſt's calming the winds and waves upon the lake of Genneſaret §. God interpoſes to controul the elements very rarely, and only on great and extraordinary occaſions: can we then believe that the devil, and ſorcerers by his aſſiſtance, controul them at pleaſure every day? So ſtrange a doctrine requires ſome clearer

* Dr. Clarke's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 5.

† See Pſ. lxv. 7. Pſ. cxxxv. 7. Pſ. cxlvii. 18. Prov. xxx. 4. Iſ. xxvii. 8. Jerem. x. 13. Amos iv. 13. Job xxxvii. 10, 11.

‡ Exod. ix. 27—29. Compare Iſ. xi. 15.

|| Exod. xiv. 15.

§ Mark iv. 41. Matt. xiv. 33.

clearer proof, than the mention made by St. Paul, of "the prince of the power of the air *." It is evident in general, that the apoſtle is deſcribing, not the *natural*, but *moral* ſtate of the world. Who the perſon here referred to is, there may be ſome difficulty to determine. If St. Paul refers to "the prince of the Heathen deities," who were thought to have their ſtation in the higher regions of the air †; he could not allow their having any real dominion over the aerial regions, and muſt be underſtood as reproaching the groſs ſtupidity of idolaters, in being as ſtrongly actuated by their regard to theſe idols, as if they had been powerful divinities. The very ſcope and deſign of this paſſage, as well as the principles which the apoſtle avows on other occaſions, are ſufficient to convince us, that he could only intend to deſcribe the Heathen deities by their uſual appellations, without allowing their claims. Suppoſe the apoſtle, to make the Epheſians aſhamed of their former debaucheries, had reproached them with having been the votaries of the god Bacchus, or the goddeſs Venus: who would have inferred from this language, that he believed Venus or Bacchus to be powerful divinities? Our Saviour himſelf uſes language ſimilar to this, when he ſpeaks of mens *ſerving Mammon*, the god of riches. If (as is more ge-

 nerally

* Epheſ. ii. 2.

† See Whitby on Epheſ. ii. 2. with whom compare Fabricius on Sextus Empiricus, note F. p. 571, and Dr. Harwood's New Introduction, p. 303.

nerally and probably ſuppoſed) St. Paul refers to *the devil*, or any ſpirit notorious for his diſaffection to God, and for having ſeduced others from their allegiance; he deſigned to upbraid the world with following ſuch a leader and example, who was conſidered by the Jews as the prince or chief of all thoſe wicked ſpirits, who were believed to have their reſidence in the air *. The apoſtle is here reminding the Epheſians of their character and ſtate before their converſion to the Chriſtian faith: "In time paſt ye "walked according † to the courſe of this world," (in conformity to the manners and idolatries of the Heathen world,) "according † to" (or after the example of) "the prince of the power of the air," even the prince "of the ſpirit ‡" (or diſpoſition and temper)

* The Jews had adopted the notion of the Heathens, that the air was inhabited by *evil ſpirits*. See Whitby on Epheſ. ii. 2. And to this notion the apoſtle ſeems to refer, when he ſpeaks of *the prince of the power of the air*, or the prince of the aerial power; deſcribing him in this manner, becauſe it was his uſual appellation, and becauſe he really was the ringleader and chief of thoſe wicked ſpirits, who were commonly conſidered as inhabitants of the air.

† Κατα.

‡ Inſtead of, *the ſpirit*, the original (του πνευματος) ought to be rendered, *of the ſpirit*; which Dr. Doddridge well explains by *diſpoſition* and *temper*. And that the word, *ſpirit*, does often bear this ſenſe, is evident from Pſ. li. 10. Luke ix. 55. Rom. viii. 15. 2 Tim. i. 7. and other places. It muſt bear this ſenſe here; for if by *the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience*, you underſtand the devil, who is *the prince* of that ſpirit, after whoſe example the Epheſians had walked?

per) "that now worketh in the children of diſobedience," or in thoſe who have not been perſuaded to embrace the Goſpel. The apoſtle is not here excuſing idolatry, from the conſideration of mens being urged to commit it by a ſupernatural power, but aggravating its guilt and ſottiſhneſs, from the conſideration of its conformity to the moſt odious character, to the example of "the prince of the power of the air," even "the prince," captain and leader of "that temper*" or ſpirit of diſaffection to God, which ſtill actuates and governs the unconverted Heathens.

III. We proceed to conſider the view which the Scripture gives us of *the ſouls of departed men.*

Many eminent writers maintain, that men ſink at death into a ſtate of total inſenſibility till the general reſurrection. But we will not avail ourſelves of this opinion; being perſuaded, that the ſouls of men, though formed with a great dependence upon the body, with regard to the exerciſe of all their faculties, are nevertheleſs ſeparable from it, and do (by the appointment of God, on which it muſt depend) exiſt in a ſtate of conſcious reflection, when actually

* The ſame manner of ſpeaking is uſed, Micah i. 13. where Lachiſh is called in the Septuagint, αρχηγος αμαρτιας, the *prince* or *ringleader of ſin*; for this city ſet Judah an *example* of idolatry. And in Maccab. ix. 61. mention is made των αρχηγων της κακιας, *of the leaders of that miſchief*, or the *chief* in it. The ſame manner of ſpeaking was familiar with the Latins. Veſtri pulcherrimi facti ille furioſus me principem dicit fuiſſe. Cicer. ep. Princeps atque architectus ſceleris. Id. Princeps ſceleris atque concitator belli. Hirt. ap. Cæſ. B. G. 8. 38.

actually separated from it. In this state however the soul can have no intercourse with the present world. It is the body alone which links us to the world, and the organs of it are the necessary and only means both of our receiving any notices and impressions from outward objects, and of our exercising any dominion over them. And consequently when this animal system, with all its wonderful powers of sensation and activity, is dissolved by death, the soul can have no communication with the material creation. To renew this communication, it must again be united to an organized body. This seems to me most agreeable to reason *, and is unquestionably the sense of divine revelation. Can less than this be implied in those passages of Scripture, which represent death, and the state to which it reduces us, *by sleep* †, in which the organs of the body are bound up; and even by *a negation of* (corporeal) *life and action* ‡? The sacred writers constantly affirm, that the dead "know not any thing ||," which concerns the present world; that they are strangers to the affairs of their nearest relatives §, "(Abraham being ignorant "of

* See above, ch. ii. sect. 1. p. 64.

† Deut. xxxi. 16. Job iii. 13. Ps. lxxvi. 5. Dan. xii. 2.

‡ Job iii. 11, 16. Ps. xxx. 9. Ps. lxxxviii. 10, 12. Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

|| Eccles. ix. 6.

§ His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them, Job xiv. 21.

" of his own deſcendants, and Iſrael acknowledging " them not *," neither acquainted with their ſuffer-ings, nor capable of affording any relief:) and in a word, that there is " no work, nor device, nor " knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave †." In this ſtate, the moſt eminent *ſaints* remain till the general reſurrection: for David is not yet " aſcended into " the heavens ‡." Much leſs are the ſouls of *wicked* men advanced to dignity and power. St. Peter calls thoſe who were formerly diſobedient in the days of Noah, *ſpirits in priſon* ‖; and our Saviour expreſſly teaches, that the ſouls of the dead are in a ſtate, where they can have, of themſelves, no poſſible intercourſe § with the living; and that they are never releaſed from it by God; no not for ſo important a purpoſe, as that of perſuading their vicious relatives to reclaim their lives; and conſequently not for any lower end.

Notwithſtanding theſe ſeveral paſſages of Scripture, and the general idea which it gives us of death, as a puniſhment for ſin, from which we are delivered by a

* Iſaiah lxiii. 16.

† Eccleſ. vi. 10.

‡ Acts ii. 4.

‖ 1 Pet. iii. 19.

§ " Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: ſo that " they which would paſs from hence to you, cannot; neither " can they paſs to us, that would come from thence." Luke xvi. 26, 31.

a proper reſurrection*; are well calculated to ſubvert the foundation of Pagan ſuperſtition and idolatry; yet, from too ſtrong a reliſh of both, the *Fathers* of the Chriſtian church (as they are ſtiled by their true *ſons*, who inherit their principles and diſpoſitions) adopted the wild fictions of the Heathen prieſts and philoſophers concerning the ſtate of the dead†; and like them maintained, that the ſouls of the

* The word ανασταση is δευτερα στασις, *reſtoration*. Suidas in voc. Death deſtroys our peculiar and diſtinguiſhing nature, as beings compounded of matter and ſpirit; yet it does not deſtroy the ſubſtance either of the material or ſpiritual part of our compoſition. The reſurrection of the dead conſiſts in their *reſtoration* to that kind of life which they formerly enjoyed, and which they loſt by death, or in *a return* to their former ſtate. In the age of the Goſpel, all who believed a reſurrection, or any future ſtate of retribution, believed the permanency of the human ſoul after death; and all who rejected the latter, denied the former. This was the caſe particularly with reſpect to the Phariſees and Sadducees amongſt the Jews. See Acts xxiii. 8, and the hiſtory of Joſephus. So that our Saviour by aſſerting the reſurrection, would be underſtood rather to aſſert, than deny, an intermediate ſtate.

† Even in the age of the apoſtles, ſome profeſſing Chriſtians denied the reſurrection of the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 12. or ſaid, it was *paſſed already*, 2 Tim. ii. 18. Having been taught by the Heathen philoſophers, to look upon the body as the priſon of the ſoul, and upon death as the means of its liberty and enlargement; they pronounced the reſurrection of the dead to be equally undeſirable and impoſſible, and interpreted what Chriſt and his apoſtles declared concerning it, of a renovation to a life of holineſs from a ſtate of ſin, deſcribed as a ſtate of death. See Whitby on 1 Cor. xv. 35, and compare Peters on Job,

the deceaſed have ſome ſenſe and knowledge of what is doing here*; that they are clothed with *ſubtle bodies*, in which they frequently appear to mankind†; and that perſons of eminent virtue become after death a kind of inferior deities, whoſe images and ſepulchres ought to be honoured and adored.

In order to juſtify the worſhip of deified or beatified ſouls, they forged innumerable miracles, pretending them to be wrought by apparitions of the ſaints in dreams, by their interceſſion, by the touch of their ſepulchres, their bones or other reliques. Sir Iſaac Newton

Job, p. 403. And becauſe ſome of the antient philoſophers had taught, that the ſouls of illuſtrious perſonages aſcended, immediately after death, into the celeſtial regions; many Chriſtians maintained, that the *martyrs* (and they only) enjoyed the ſame privilege.

* Plato, ep. 2. ſays, ἐστι τις αἰσθησις τοις τεθνειωσι των ἐνθαδε.

† The Jews alſo had imbibed this Pagan principle: for the diſciples were *terrified* at the firſt appearance of Chriſt after his reſurrection, and "ſuppoſed that they had ſeen a ſpirit," Luke xxiv. 37. It is obſervable, that our Saviour, in his reply, neither countenances nor controverts the opinion, that ghoſts can render themſelves viſible to human ſight, and that in their priſtine form; but contents himſelf with arguing on their own principles, in order to convince them of the truth of his reſurrection; *q. d.* "If you will feel and handle my body, you will "ſoon perceive from the ſolidity of it, that I am not a mere "ghoſt, which you conceive of as preſenting itſelf to the eye, "and yet eluding the graſp of the hand; but a real man, rai-"ſed from the dead in the very ſame body, compounded of "fleſh and bones, in which I ſuffered death."

Newton * has ſhewn this concerning the Fathers in the eaſt; and the ſame is equally true concerning thoſe in the weſt. To guard all honeſt minds againſt ſo dangerous an impoſture, it pleaſed God to fortel it, and to brand the authors and ſupporters of it with the character they ſo well deſerve, that of "apoſtates from genuine Chriſtianity," while they retained the outward profeſſion of it, and "profligate venders of lies. Now the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſſly, that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart † from the faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines concerning demons ‡," (the ſouls of men deified after death,) "through the hypocriſy (or, feigning)

* Obſervations on Daniel, ch. xiv.

‡ This *apoſtacy* or *revolt* from the Chriſtian faith, refers to the corruption of it by the introduction of an *idolatrous worſhip;* as is ſhewn by the eminently learned Mr. Joſeph Mede, Works, p. 625. ed. 4.

‡ διδασκαλιαις δαιμονιων, *doctrines concerning demons.* Compare Heb. vi. 2. Acts xiii. 12. Jerem. x. 8. in the lxx. and Mede, p. 626. St. Paul here ſpecifies the idolatrous worſhip which would prevail amongſt Chriſtians, which is that of demons, deified human ſpirits. See Rev. ix. 20. and below, ch. iii. ſect. 2. By demons, it is impoſſible here to underſtand *devils*, (in the common acceptation of that word;) becauſe the Chriſtian church, notwithſtanding its dreadful degeneracy in many other inſtances, never defiled itſelf with the worſhip of devils. In Epiphanius (adver. Hær. lxxviii. p. 1055. tom. 1. ed. Petav.) there is a clauſe added to the forecited paſſage from St. Paul, which at leaſt ſerves to explain it, and which ſeems to have been a part of the original text, "for they ſhall be worſhippers of the dead, as in Iſrael alſo they were worſhipped,"

" feigning) of lyars *," (who will ſupport their own erroneous doctrine concerning the divinity and worſhip of dead men, by falſe miracles and other legendary tales, and whom therefore Chriſtians ought to deteſt as perſons) " having their conſcience ſeared " with a hot iron †." Thus the ſacred Scriptures both give us ſuch a repreſentation of the ſtate of the dead as is inconſiſtent with their poſſeſſing a miraculous power, and reſolve the whole hiſtory of their intercourſe with mankind into the falſhood of its compilers; notwithſtanding, under various pretences, (ſuch as " forbidding to marry," and " com- " manding to abſtain from meat ‡,") they have aſſumed a claim to extraordinary ſanctity.

SECT. II.

The Scripture repreſentation of the nature and claims of the Heathen gods, conſidered.

THE gods of the Heathens taken notice of in Scripture, are of two different kinds; the world,

" ſhipped," that is, when the Iſraelites fell into the Heathen idolatry. See Mills and Beza in loc. and Mann's critical notes on ſome paſſages of Scripture, p. 92.

* Εν υποκρισει ψευδολογων.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 3.

world, together with all its conſtituent parts and principles; and demons.

1. The Heathens deified the world, together with all its conſtituent parts and powers. Conceiving the world to be pervaded and animated * by a vital and intelligent ſubſtance, they regarded it as a divinity †, which contained, framed and governed all things. The world poſſeſſing animal life and intelligence, they concluded the ſame concerning the ſeveral portions of it, eſpecially its moſt illuſtrious parts and active principles, the elements, the heavens and all their hoſt, the winds alſo, and whatever other beings partook

* Principio cælum, ac terras, campoſque liquentes,
Lucentemque globum lunæ, Titaniaque aſtra
Spiritus intus alit, totamque infuſa per artus
Mens agitat molem, et magno ſe corpore miſcet.
Virgil. Æn. l. 6. l. 724.
Vide etiam Virg. Georg. l. 4. v. 221. & Plutarch. de Placitis Philoſoph. l. 2. c. 3. p. 886.

† Neq magis approbabit nunc lucere, quam, quoniam Stoicus eſt, hunc mundum eſſe ſapientem, habere mentem, quæ & ſe & ipſum fabricata ſit, & omnia moderetur, moveat, regat, Cicero's Acad. Q. l. 2. c. 37. Nihil mundo perfectius,—ſapiens eſt, & propterea deus, Id. de Nat. Deor. l. 2. c. 14. Omnium rerum parens eſt mundus, c. 34. The Platoniſts indeed ſometimes ſpoke of the world as only a ſecondary and begotten god, (as we learn from Origen. contr. Celſ. l. 5. p. 235. and Plato's Tim. p. 1049. E. F. 1090. A.) but the doctrine of the Stoics, which repreſented the world as the chief god, (Diogen. Laert. l. 7. ſegm. 137, 146. Plutarch de Placit. Philoſoph. l. 1. c. 7. and Senec. ep. 94.) was more conformable to common creed of the Pagans.

partook of a ſimilar ſubſtance; and conſidered them all as ſo many diſtinct deities. The ſentient nature and divinity of the ſun, moon and ſtars more eſpecially, was ſtrenuouſly aſſerted by the philoſophers *, as well as believed by the common people; and was indeed the very foundation of the Pagan idolatry. This point was allowed by all, except atheiſts †, or thoſe who were reputed ſuch. Anaxagoras, though he maintained the exiſtence of an infinite mind, and its efficiency in the formation of the univerſe, was nevertheleſs accuſed of atheiſm and impiety, for teaching that the heavenly bodies were inanimate and unintelligent beings, and the ſun itſelf a maſs of inflamed matter. Thus it came to paſs, that the Pagan nations loſt ſight of the argument, from the admirable contrivance of the natural world, in favour of the exiſtence of the true God, the original cauſe of all things. Balbus, the Stoic, in Cicero's ſecond book concerning the nature of the gods, diſcourſes admirably on the order and harmony of the univerſe, and the uſe and beauty of the parts that compoſe it: but what is the inference he draws from theſe premiſes? "that the world was a god, and the

* Particularly by Pythagoras and his followers, (as we learn from Diogen. Laert. l. 8. p. 509.) and by the Stoics. Thus Balbus expreſſes himſelf, (in Cicer. de Nat. Deor. l. 2. 15.) Atque hac mundi divinitate perſpecta, tribuenda eſt ſideribus eadem divinitas. See above, note p. 112; and below, note p. 114.

† Stob. Ecl. Phyſ. c. 25. Plotin. Enn. 4. l. 3. c. 7. and Plutarch. adv. Colotem. p. 1123. A.

" habitation of the gods *," and that it was governed by " the providence of the gods †." Theſe were the firſt deities of all the idolatrous nations; and were eſteemed eternal, ſovereign and ſupreme ‡. They

* Eſſe mundum deum, & deorum domum.

† Deorum providentia.

‡ Ariſtotle mentions it as a doctrine delivered down from their very earlieſt anceſtors, and he himſelf applauds it as a divine ſaying, *that theſe firſt ſubſtances are gods*, θεους ειναι τας πρωτας ουσιας, Metaphyſ. l. 14. c. 8. in fin. Plato condemns the doctrine of Anaxagoras, becauſe it was inconſiſtent with the divinity of the ſun and moon, which have προσκυνησεις ελληνων τε και βαρβαρων παντων, " the adorations of all the Greeks and Barbarians." He makes Socrates diſclaim this doctrine of Anaxagoras as abſurd, and puts the following words into his mouth, " What! do not I believe as other men do, that the ſun and " moon are gods?" ουδε ηλιον, ουδε σεληνην αρα νομιζω ειναι θεους, ωσπερ οι αλλοι ανθρωποι; Plat. Apol. Socrat. p. 362. F. G. ed. Ficini. And he directs a more excellent worſhip to be paid to the heaven, than to the other gods, becauſe all men confeſſed it to be the cauſe of all good things, Epin. p. 1006. A. Plutarch cenſures the Epicureans for aſſerting, that the ſun and moon are void of intelligence, whom all men worſhipped, Adv. Colotem. p. 1123. Sanchoniathon (apud Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 1. c. 9.) repreſents the moſt ancient nations, particularly the Phenicians and Egyptians as acknowledging only the natural gods, the ſun, moon, planets and elements. And Plato declares it as his opinion, that the firſt Grecians likewiſe held theſe only to be gods, as many of the Barbarians in his time did. In Cratyl. p. 273. F. See alſo Herodot. l. 1. c. 131, 138. l. 3. c. 16. Diodor. Sic. l. 1. p. 10, 11. ed. Rhodomani. Strab. Geogr. l. 15. p. 732. Polyb. Hiſt. l. 7. p. 699, 700. ed. Gronov. Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 2. c. 2. p. 59. Even Philo (lib. de Somniis,) and Origen (in his books περι αρχων,) maintain, that " the ſtars are ſo many ſouls incorruptible and immortal."

They are diſtinguiſhed by the title of *natural gods* *.

2. The Heathens likewiſe believed, that there were certain ſpirits who held *a middle rank* † between the gods and men on earth, and carried on all intercourſe between them; conveying the addreſſes of men to the gods, and the divine benefits to men ‡. Theſe ſpirits were called *demons* ‖, *diſtributors* or *diſpenſers* of good and evil to mankind. Their name is expreſſive of their office, and of that power and authority which they derived from the celeſtial gods §.

* *Φυσικοι θεοι.* Philo Byblius apud Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 1. c. 9. p. 33. ed. Paris.

† *Πᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐστι θεοῦ τε καὶ θνητοῦ.* Plato in Sympos. p. 202. tom. 3. ed. Serrani. Plutarch (de defect. Orac.) ſays, "Thoſe ſeem to me to have ſolved very many and great "difficulties or doubts, who place the demons," *ἐν μέσῳ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων.*

‡ Plutarch de defect. Orac. p. 415, 416, 417, 421. E. Platon. Sympoſ. p. 202, 203. tom. 3. ed. Serrani. Apuleius de deo Socrat. p. 674, 677. ed. Delph. Jamblichus de myſter. & Auguſt. de civit. Dei, l. 8. c. 18. l. 9, c. 9. 21.

‖ They were called *demons*, *παρὰ τὸ δαῆναι τὰ πάντα, ἢ μερίζειν τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις*, Proclus in Heſiod. See alſo the ſcholiaſt on Homer, Il. 1. v. 222. Others derive *δαίμων* from *δαήμων*, ſciens, Plato Cratylus, p. 397. and Lactantius, II. 14. Demons were thought to be intruſted with the *inſpection* and *government* of mankind.

§ Plutarch (de defect. Orac.) informs us, that each demon was called by the name of that celeſtial god, *παρ' ὃ δυνάμεως καὶ τιμῆς ἔλαχεν.* Apuleius (De deo Socratis, p. 675, ed. Delph.) ſays, Cuncta

It was the opinion of many, that the celeſtial divinities did not themſelves interpoſe in human affairs, but committed the entire adminiſtration of the government of this lower world to theſe ſubaltern deities *. Hence they became the grand objects of the religious hopes and fears of the Pagans, of immediate dependence and divine worſhip. "If idols are no-"thing," ſays Celſus †, "what harm can there be "to join in the public feſtivals? If they are demons, "then it is certain that they are gods, in whom we "are to confide, and to whom we ſhould offer ſacri-"fices and prayers to render them propitious." In the moſt learned nations, they did not ſo properly *ſhare*, as *ingroſs* the public devotion. To theſe alone ſacrifices were offered, while the celeſtial gods were worſhipped only with a pure mind, or with hymns and praiſes ‖.

It has been often ſaid, that the demons of the Heathens

Cuncta cæleſtium voluntate, numine, & authoritate, ſed dæmonum obſequio, & opera, & miniſterio fieri arbitrandum eſt. Apuleius here refines the vulgar ſyſtem, when he repreſents demons merely as a miniſterial order of beings.

* Neque enim pro majeſtate deum cæleſtium fuerit, hæc curare. Apuleius de deo Socratis, p. 677. ed. Delph. Plato (in Sympoſ. p. 202. tom. 3. ed. Serm.) ſpeaks to the ſame effect, "No god has any immediate intercourſe with man: all com-"merce betwen the gods and men is carried on by the media-"tion of demons." Does not Plato's θεὸς ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μίγνυται, explain Dan. ii. 11?

† Apud Origen. c. Celſ. l. 8. p. 393.

‖ Mede's works, p. 636.

thens were ſpirits of an higher origin than the human race. Thoſe who hold this opinion, lay the chief ſtreſs on the following arguments; the force of which we ſhall take the liberty to examine. 1ſt, "The ſupreme deity of the Pagans is called *the greateſt demon.*" Suppoſing this to be the caſe, it is perhaps one proof, amongſt many others, that their ſupreme deity ſuſtained a human character, and had once been a mortal man. Notwithſtanding the magnificent titles by which the heathens deſcribe their ſupreme deity; yet they do at the ſame time inform us, that he had a father and a mother, a grandfather and a grandmother, and was of the ſame kindred with the other gods of whom he was chief. And though he was ſuperior to any of them ſingly, he was no match for two or three of them in conjunction; as appears from the dread he was in of being ſeized and bound by Neptune, Juno and Minerva; from whoſe violence he was not ſaved without the aſſiſtance of Briareus with his hundred arms. This is related by Homer * of that very Jupiter, whom he ſtyles "the father and ſovereign of gods and men, "who thunders on high, and ſhakes all heaven with "his nod." Such likewiſe is the repreſentation made of Jupiter by the other Heathen writers †: they aſcribe

* Il. 1. v. 398. See Lucian. Deor. dialog. inter oper. v. 1. p. 228. ed. Varior.

† Heſiod, in particular, ſpeaks of Jupiter in the very higheſt terms, in his Theogony, v. 47, 457, 481, 506, 548: and yet he tells us, that he was the youngeſt ſon of Rhea and Saturn, and dethroned his father, v. 453, 490.

to him the prerogatives, titles and epithets of their ſupreme natural divinity, and at the ſame time cloath him with the weakneſſes, vices *, and all the properties of a human being. It is plain therefore that he ſuſtained two characters, that of a natural, and that of a hero god. It ſeems difficult, if not impoſſible, to reconcile the different repreſentations made of him, on any other ſuppoſition. It is allowed by all, that a mixture of phyſiology and herology runs through the Pagan ſyſtem of divinity †. It is likewiſe evident, that as amongſt the natural, ſo alſo amongſt the hero gods, there was a diſtinction of rank and dignity, and one was conſidered as prince of the reſt. It farther appears, that deified human ſpirits were (according to the Pagan ſyſtem of theology) aſſociated with and repreſented the natural gods, and that both were called

* Chærea (in Terence, Eunuch. Act. iii. ſc. 5.) hardens himſelf into the commiſſion of a rape, by the example of Jupiter, the god, who ſhakes with his thunder the lofty battlements of heaven; qui templa cœli ſumma ſonitu concutit.

† That the firſt ſubſtances are gods, and that the deity contains univerſal nature, Ariſtotle tells us, was delivered *in the form of a fable*, ἐν μύθου σχήματι, Metaphyſ. l. 14. c. 8. in fin. Theſe fables were the means of corrupting their theology, and occaſioned the Heathens to transfer their worſhip to new objects. Specimens of the manner, in which they accommodated the fabulous traditions concerning their hero gods to the deified objects of nature, may be ſeen, in Cicero de Nat. deor. l. 2. c 24, 25.

called by the ſame names *. The ſun, or æther, or air, or whatever other part of nature was eſteemed the ſupreme deity of the Pagans, was called in Egypt, Oſiris; in Chaldea and Phenicia, Bel or Baal; and in many other countries, Jupiter. Now it is univerſally known, that Jupiter, Bel and Oſiris had once been mortal men, who were ſuppoſed to be advanced after death to a deified ſtate. For the ſame reaſons, therefore, for which the chief Heathen numen was called Oſiris, or Bel, or Jupiter, he might be called a demon; ſuppoſing the word to denote a deified human ſpirit. It was under this laſt character that he was principally regarded by the common people. 2dly, It is further urged, "that demons are deſcribed as beings placed *between* the gods and men." This deſcription reſpects, not their *nature*, but their *office* †, (which was that of *mediators* and agents be-

 tween

* Diodorus Siculus (l. 1. p. 12. ed. Rhodomani,) ſays, that ſome of the earthly gods had the ſame names with the celeſtial, ὁμωνύμως ὑπαρχεῖν τοῖς ἐρανίοις. See Plutarch cited above, p. 175. note l. From Philo Biblius (apud Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 1. c. 9. p. 33. ed. Paris.) we learn, that the ancient nations "gave the names of their kings to the elements of the world," τοῖς κοσμικοῖς στοιχείοις, which were their natural deities, whom alone they acknowledged to be ſtrictly and properly gods. Lord Herbert obſerves, (De Relig. Gentil. c. 11.) Initio heroas in aſtris plerumque, aſtra in heroibus colentes, adeo ut cognomines ita eſſent, neque ſatis judicari poſſet, num aniles de iis contextæ fabulæ ad aſtra myſtice, an ad homines mythice pertinerent.

† See above, p. 115.

tween men on earth, and the celeſtial gods;) and conſequently agrees with ſuch human ſpirits (and it is not to be denied, that there were ſome ſuch) as were thought to be advanced to the office of demons. It may be proper to take notice farther, that when Jamblichus *, the Pythagorean philoſopher, makes it the reward of good men at death, to be converted *into angels and angelical ſouls* †; he has the ſame meaning, as if he had called them *demons*. The learned allow, that Jamblichus, Hierocles, Simplicius and others, uſe the word *demons* and *angels* indiſcriminately. Hierocles ſays expreſsly ‡, that the middle kind of beings were called indifferently *angels*, or *demons*, or *heroes*. Now it is univerſally admitted, that the latter were human ſpirits: and conſequently the former were ſo likewiſe. Philo ſays ||, "Souls, demons and "angels are only different names, but imply one and "the ſame ſubſtance." And in another place § he affirms, "that Moſes called thoſe angels, whom the "other philoſophers ſtyled demons." 3dly, It is pleaded, "that demons are expreſsly diſtinguiſhed "from *heroes*, who were the departed ſouls of men."

Demons

* Apud Stob. Eclog. Phyſic. l. 1. p. 144.

† Εἰς ἀγγέλους ἢ εἰς ἀγγελικὰς ψυχάς.

‡ In Car. Pythag.

|| De Gigantibus, p. 286.

§ De Somn. p. 586. Ὃς ἄλλοι φιλόσοφοι δαίμονας, ἀγγέλους Μωσῆς ἐκάλεσεν ὀνομάζειν.

Demons were advanced to a *rank* and *ſtation* * ſuperior to that of heroes; and this difference occaſioned the diſtinction. Plutarch † teaches, "that, according to a divine nature and juſtice, the ſouls of virtuous men are advanced to the rank of demons; and that from demons, if they are properly purified, they are exalted into gods, not by any political inſtitution, but according to right reaſon." The ſame author ſays ‡, "That Iſis and Oſiris were, for their virtue, changed from good demons into gods, as were Hercules and Bacchus afterwards, receiving the united honours of both gods and demons ||."

I do not affirm, that the Heathens had no demons of

* On this difference of rank and ſtation, ſee Hierocles in ſecundum Aur. Carm. p. 41.

† Plutarch. Vit. Romul. p. 36. A. ed. Paris. and in his book de defect. orac. he ſpeaks of human ſouls as commencing firſt heroes, then demons, and afterward advanced to a more ſublime degree.

‡ De Iſ. & Oſir. p. 361.

|| Καὶ θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων. Theſe ſentiments of Plutarch are confirmed by other writers. Diodorus Siculus (p. 3. ed. Rhodomani.) after ſpeaking of Hercules, adds, τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν οἱ μὲν ἡρωϊκῶν, οἱ δὲ ἰσοθέων τιμῶν ἔτυχον. It alſo appears from the caſe of the Greek Hercules, as related by Pauſanias, (Corinthiac. l. 2. c. 10. p. 133. ed. Kuhnii.) that heroes roſe by degrees to the rank of gods, and came to be worſhipped as ſuch. (For the worſhip paid to the gods, was different from that paid to the heroes.)

of a different kind from thoſe who were of human extract *. The foregoing reflections were merely deſigned to ſhew, that the higher order of demons is not ſo frequently ſpoken of, as is generally ſuppoſed; and that the common hypotheſis is built upon weak grounds. I ſhall now aſſign thoſe reaſons which induce me to think, that by demons (ſuch, I mean, as were "the more immediate objects of the eſtabliſhed worſhip" amongſt the ancient nations, particularly the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans,) we are to underſtand beings of an earthly origin, or ſuch departed human ſouls as were believed to become demons. Heſiod †, and many other poets ‡, who have recorded the ancient hiſtory or traditions, on which the public faith and worſhip were founded, aſſert, that the men of the golden age, who were ſuppoſed to be very good, became demons after death, and diſpenſers of good things to mankind. This account of demons is fully confirmed by the other writings of the ancient Heathens. Many paſſages have been produced from thoſe writings by ſeveral learned moderns ||, in which demons muſt have the ſame meaning as in Heſiod. And

* Some of the lateſt philoſophers, in particular, (ſuch as Apuleius, de deo Socrat, p. 690.) fancied that there was a higher kind of demons, who had never inhabited human bodies. Ammonius in Plutarch entertained the ſame ſentiment. De defect. orac. p. 431. tom. 2. ed. Paris. 1624.

† Heſiod. Oper. & dier. l. 1. 120.

‡ Plato's Cratylus, p. 398. tom. 1. ed. Serrani.

|| Mr. Joſ. Mede, and Dr. Sykes.

And there are many more, which I do not remember to have met with in any former writers on this ſubject. Some of theſe paſſages have been already cited; and a much greater number we ſhall have occaſion to cite in the ſequel. I will here only take notice of two from Celſus, becauſe they ſerve to ſhew, how long the word preſerved its original import, and was uſed to deſcribe a deified man. Thus Celſus * inſults Chriſtians under their ſufferings: "Your demon, or "as you ſay, the Son of God, gives you no help." In another place †, after ſpeaking of the followers of Marcion, he adds, "Others form to themſelves ano-"ther maſter and demon." Perhaps it would be as uſeleſs, as it would be endleſs, to collect all the paſſages from the writings of the Heathens, in which mention is made of demons, in the ſenſe here aſſerted. For ſtill ſome would allege, that the word occurred frequently in a different meaning. Our main deſign (which is, to explain and juſtify the Scripture repreſentation of the Heathen deities,) will be anſwered; if it can be ſhewn, that the more immediate objects of divine worſhip in the moſt poliſhed Heathen nations were deified mortals. This, at the ſame time, may ſerve to ſhew, in what ſenſe it is moſt natural to underſtand the word, demons, when it is uſed to deſcribe thoſe gods.

That the more immediate objects of popular adoration amongſt the Heathens were deified human beings,

* Apud Origen. c. Celſ. l. 8. § 39. p. 803.

† P. 272.

ings, is a fact atteſted by all antiquity, whether Pagan, Jewiſh or Chriſtian. Let the *Heathens* themſelves ſpeak, and let us credit the united teſtimony of their hiſtorians, their poets, and their philoſophers, to a fact which they could not but admit, though it redounded ſo much to their diſhonour. We ſhall begin with the doctrine of the *hiſtorians;* becauſe it is clear and explicit, and may ſerve to guide us through the labyrinths of the Pagan theology. Herodotus *, when ſpeaking of the Perſians, ſays, "They have "neither ſtatues, nor temples, nor altars.—What I "take to be the reaſon, is, that they don't believe, "like the Greeks, that the gods are of the race of "men †." Now, inaſmuch as the Greeks derived their religion from the Phenicians and Egyptians, and ſpread it amongſt the Romans, there can be no doubt, but that the gods of all theſe people were of human race. Philo Byblius ‡, the tranſlator of Sanchoniathon's hiſtory of the gods, expreſsly aſſures us, "That "the Phenicians and Egyptians, from whom other "people derived this cuſtom, reckoned thoſe amongſt "the greateſt gods, who had been benefactors to the "human race: and that to them they erected pillars "and ſtatues, and dedicated ſacred feſtivals." Diodorus Siculus ‖ treats largely concerning the Gentile theology;

* Lib. 1. c. 131.

† Οὐκ ἀνθρωποφυίας ἐνόμισαν τὰς θεὰς, κατάπερ οἱ Ἕλληνες, εἶναι.

‡ Apud. Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 1. c. 9. p. 32.

‖ Lib. 1. & 5.

theology; and he ſpeaks of it as the opinion of antiquity, "that there were two claſſes of gods; the one "eternal and immortal," (the natural gods ſpoken of above;) "the other ſuch as were born upon the "earth, and arrived at the titles and honours of di-"vinity, on account of the bleſſings they beſtowed "upon mankind *." He conſiders Saturn, Jupiter, Apollo and the reſt, as the primary gods of Paganiſm; and yet ſpeaks of them as illuſtrious men.

The *poets* deliver the ſame ſentiments concerning the gods, as the hiſtorians do. In their theogony † or generation of the gods, (which was the ſame thing with their coſmogony or generation of the world,) and in their fabulous theology, we have an account both of their natural and hero gods; though by mixing together their herology and phyſiology, they have introduced much confuſion into their ſyſtem of divinity. With regard to the principal objects of popular worſhip, they have given us an account of their birth and parentage, of their marriage and offspring, and have entered into a detail of their actions ‡. Whatever ſublime titles the poets beſtow upon them, they hold them out to our view chiefly under a human character. Nor is there any juſt reaſon to affirm, that the poets invented what they ſay concerning their gods. For their works are either faithful records of ancient

* Lib. 1. p. 12. ed. Rhodomani.

† See Heſiod's Theogony, and Homer's Il. 14. v. 201.

‡ See what was ſaid above concerning Jupiter, p. 117.

ancient traditions, or accurate repreſentations of life and manners. Epic and dramatic writings do not allow any deviation from truth and juſtneſs of character.

It is when reading the *philoſophers*, that it becomes us moſt to be upon our guard, if we would not be led into miſtakes concerning the Pagan deities. When they began to reaſon upon the nature of the gods, innumerable objections aroſe in their minds againſt the vulgar ſyſtem of theology; which ſome of them derided, and others endeavoured to refine and improve. Shocked at the abſurdity of the worſhip paid to dead perſons, they might be willing to perſuade themſelves and others, that their demons were ſpiritual ſubſtances of a more noble origin than the human race. They undertook to determine, with what ſort of beings all the different regions of the univerſe were peopled; and ſome of them filled the æther with ſuch demons as had never been men. But we have no concern here with *the ſpeculations* of the philoſophers, who on this, as on other points, contradicted one another, and themſelves likewiſe. It is ſufficient to our preſent purpoſe to obſerve, that they were not able to deny, that the public worſhip was directed to men who had been raiſed to the rank of gods and demons. Socrates*, indeed, judged it difficult to declare the origin of demons; which at firſt ſight ſeems ſcarce conſiſtent with a perſuaſion, that they were of human extract. Nevertheleſs, he thought they were natives

* Plato's Timæus, p. 481. ed. Baſil.

natives of this lower world, proceeding from the commerce of celeſtial with mortal beings. Perhaps this ſtrange commerce was what created the difficulty in the breaſt of Socrates: for he rejected many of the common fables concerning the gods. Nor does it certainly appear, that even the celeſtial beings concerned in theſe amours, were not originally mortals, though afterwards advanced to a deified ſtate. Plato commends Heſiod and the other poets, who affirmed, that whenever any good man dies, *he becomes a demon* *. He elſewhere ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe †. The latter Platoniſts, though they endeavoured to ſoften the abſurdity of the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of theology, could not but admit a claſs of gods and demons, that had been human ſouls. Varro, the moſt learned of all the Romans, aſſerted, as St. Auguſtin informs us ‡, that one would be at a loſs to find, in the writings of the ancients, gods who had not been men. Cicero || contends, "that the whole "heaven

* Γίνεται δαίμων. Plat. Cratyl. p. 398. tom. 1. ed. Serrani. See alſo Maxim. Tyr. Diſſ. 27. p. 283. ed. Davis.

† "All thoſe who die valiantly in war are of Heſiod's golden "generation, and become demons; and we ought for ever to "worſhip and adore their ſepulchres, as the ſepulchres of de-"mons." He affirms the ſame concerning all who were judged excellently good in life, in whatever manner they die. Plato de Republ. l. 5. p. 468. tom. 2. ed. Serrani.

‡ De civit. Dei, l. 8.

|| Quid? totum prope cælum, ne plures perſequar, nonne humano genere completum eſt?—Ipſi illi, majorum gentium dii

" heaven was almoſt entirely filled with the human " race, that even the greater deities * were originally " natives of this lower world, that their ſepulchres " were ſhewn in Greece, and the traditions concern- " ing them preſerved in the myſteries." In like manner Pliny †, Labeo ‡, Servius ‖ and others, ſpeak openly of the origin of the gods. And Plutarch himſelf vindicates the deification of human ſouls, by the principles of reaſon and philoſophy ¶. Not only did Atheiſts and Epicureans aſſert, that the Heathen gods had been men; this was a point allowed by the zealous ſupporters of the eſtabliſhed religion, even in an age

dii qui habentur, hinc a nobis profecti in cælum reperientur. Quære, quorum demonſtrantur ſepulchra in Grecia: reminiſcere, quoniam es initiatus, quæ traduntur myſteriis: tum denique, quam hoc latè pateat, intelliges. Tuſc. Quæſt. l. 1. c. 12, 13. It is affirmed in Cicero's dialogue de Nat. deor. l. 1. that every age honoured the inventors of the uſe of food, ut deos omnium clariſſimos. See alſo l. 1. c. 42. l. 3. c. 15, 23. and compare Lactant. l. 1. c. 15. p. 85. l. 2. c. 2. p. 146. Euſeb. Dem. Ev. l. 8. p. 364.

* The greater deities were
Juno, Veſta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars, Mercurius, Jovis, Neptunus, Vulcanus, Apollo.

† Plin. Nat. Hiſt. l. 2. c. 7.

‡ Servius (upon the 3d Æneid) ſays, Labeo in libris qui appellantur, De diis quibus origo animalis eſt, ait eſſe quædam ſacra, quibus animæ humanæ vertuntur in deos.

‖ Serv. ad Æn. 8. l. 319.

¶ See the paſſage from Plutarch cited above, p. 182.

age when the improvements in ſcience expoſed it to contempt.

Theſe teſtimonies of the Heathens are fully confirmed by *facts*, which cannot be diſputed: particularly by the very nature of the worſhip paid to the Heathen deities. If no argument can be drawn from the ſacrifices * which were offered them; yet their images, columns, ſhrines, reliques, altars (or graveſtones) and temples (which were their ſepulchres), are ſufficient proofs, that the objects of public worſhip were ſuch dead men and women as ſuperſtition deified †.

* Deified human ghoſts might more naturally be ſuppoſed to be nouriſhed by the fumes of incenſe, and the ſteams of ſlaughtered beaſts aſcending from their altars, than the ſun, moon and ſtars. See Origen. c. Celſ. l. 7. c. 334, 335. Concerning the idea of ſacrifices, as the nouriſhment of the gods, conſult Ariſtoph. Aveſ. v. 183, 1515. Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. v. p. 181. Lucian. Prometh. tom. 1. p. 183. ed. Græv. De Sacrificiis, ib. p. 366. Porphyr. de Abſtin. l. 2. c. 42. p. 86. ed. Cantabr. We are told by Euſebius (Præp. Ev. l. 2. c. 9.) that in the earlieſt ages, when the ſtars only were adored, they were not honoured by animal ſacrifices: which ſeem therefore to have been principally directed to the hero gods. See above, p. 176. Nevertheleſs, it muſt be acknowleged, that ſuch Pagans and Chriſtians as believed the Heathen gods to be a different order of demons from human ſouls, repreſented thoſe demons as nouriſhed by libations and ſacrifices.

† See Sir Iſ. Newton's Chronology, p. 159, 160. and eſpecially Mr. Joſ. Mede's works, p. 632, 634. That the ſtately tombs of the Heathen gods became public temples, is alſo ſhewn by Euſebius, Præp. Ev. l. 2. c. 6.

Even *funeral rites* * were performed in their honour. Euhemerus therefore in his ſacred hiſtory, beſides recording the pedigree and actions of the Heathen gods, pointed out the very places where they were buried. His hiſtory was tranſlated into Latin by Ennius, and is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus without any marks of diſapprobation. Thoſe who cenſured †, were not able to confute, the ſubſtance

* Mede's works, p. 628, 630. Lowth on Iſ. viii. 19. Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. 1. c. 15. Lucan thus addreſſes Egypt,

—Tu plangens hominem teſtaris Oſirin. l. 8. v. 833.

† It has been ſaid by learned men, upon the authority of a paſſage in Cicero, (de Nat. deor. l. 1. c. 42.) that the opinion of Euhemerus was generally regarded by the Heathens as atheiſm, or at leaſt as great impiety. Were this true, the moſt that it would prove, is, that the Heathen gods were not regarded as dead men by their worſhippers, though they were really ſuch. But what ſome repreſent as the general ſentiment of the Heathens, is nothing more than the objection of Cotta, under the character of an *Academic*, which he could not ſuſtain, without propoſing the difficulties and objections, with which his ſubject was embaraſſed. See Cicero de Nat. deor. l. 3. c. 39. and l. 1. c. 5. Cotta ſays, Ab Euhemero autem & mortes, & ſepulturæ demonſtrantur deorum; and then aſks the following queſtion: Utrum igitur hic confirmaſſe videtur religionem, an penitus totam ſuſtuliſſe? This objection is not deſigned to diſprove the fact, that the Heathens worſhipped dead perſons; but to expoſe the abſurdity of that worſhip. Cotta admitted the fact, and knew that the worſhip itſelf pointed out the objects of it: Quo quid abſurdius, quam—homines jam morte deletos reponere in deos, quorum omnis cultus eſſet futurus in luctu? Cicero de Nat. deor. l. 1. c. 15. Plutarch alſo cenſures the doctrine of Euhemerus as productive of

ſtance of his ſyſtem. If the mere abſurdity of an opinion would prove that it was never entertained; what a blank would this reaſoning make in the hiſtory of religion amongſt the Pagans?

We go on to examine the opinion of the *Jews* concerning the Heathen gods. With reſpect to the writers of the Old Teſtament; though they knew, that the Pagans believed in ſidereal and elementary deities, yet they very properly deſcribe their gods as

of atheiſm, De Iſ. & Oſir. p. 359, F. p. 360. Nevertheleſs, from this treatiſe it appears, that the Egyptian prieſts acknowledged, that Oſiris and the other gods of Egypt had been men. Nay, Plutarch himſelf confeſſes, (p. 359. E.) that thoſe who hold this opinion, ἔχουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ἱστορουμένων βεβαίας, *have the ſupport of hiſtory:* to which he oppoſes ſpeculation, p. 360. This confirms what was obſerved concerning the philoſophers, p. 189. I admit, however, that the doctrine of Euhemerus might even in the opinion of the vulgar Heathens, be very liable to the cenſure of impiety; and certainly was liable to this cenſure, if he maintained, (as poſſibly he did, or might be thought to maintain) that the Heathen gods were *mere* men, not advanced to a deified ſtate; or that the Heathens had no other gods but theſe. In this view he might well paſs for an atheiſt. The deification of men preſuppoſed the exiſtence of the natural gods, with whom they were aſſociated, and from whom they derived their power and authority. And therefore if he rejected the natural gods, he would be thought not to believe in any gods at all. With this he ſeems to be charged by Theophil. Antiochen. ad Autolyc. l. 3. p. 210. ed Oxon. Concerning Euhemerus, ſee Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 2. c. 2. p. 59, where there is an extract from the 6th book of Diodorus Siculus, now loſt. See alſo Lactantius, Div. Inſtit. l. 1. c. 2. p. 62. et de ira Dei, c. 2. p. 62. ed. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

*dead** perſons; becauſe it was to ſuch that the public worſhip was more immediately directed. Here it ſhould be obſerved, that when they deſcribe the Heathen gods as *dead* perſons; they conſider them as what they *really were*, not what they were *conceived to be* by their worſhippers; as ſome have aſſerted: for their worſhippers regarded them as men advanced to divine power and dominion. In contradiſtinction from theſe, the ancient prophets called Jehovah the only *living*† God. Thoſe Jews who tranſlated the Old Teſtament into the Greek language, (I mean the authors of that verſion which is called the Septuagint) ſtyle the Heathen gods, *demons*‡. And it has been generally

* This is implied in that declaration, which Moſes required each Iſraelite to make, at offering the firſt fruits of every year, Deut. xxvi. 14. "I have not given ought thereof for (or to) the dead," to any Heathen deity: which ſuppoſes, that each of thoſe deities was nothing more than a dead perſon. Such was Iſis, to whom Spencer and Le Clerc think there is here a peculiar reference. Thoſe who partook of the ſacrifices offered to the Pagan gods, are ſaid "to eat the ſacrifices of the dead," Pſ. cvi. 28. compared with Numb. xxv. 1, 2, 3. It was becauſe the Heathen deities were dead men, that Iſaiah reproaches thoſe who had recourſe to their pretended oracles, as "ſeeking for the living to the dead." Iſ. viii. 19.

† Deut. v. 26. Joſh. iii. 10. 1 Sam. xvii. 26. 2 Kings xix. 4. Jerem. x. 10. Dan. vi. 26. and many other places.

‡ "They ſacrificed unto demons," δαιμονίοις, Deut. xxxii. 17. "All the gods of the Heathen are demons," δαιμόνια, Pſ. xcv. 6. "They ſacrificed their ſons and their daughters unto demons," δαιμονίοις, Pſ. cvi. 37.

generally ſuppoſed, that by demons they meant certain *created* ſpirits of a celeſtial origin, who, though fallen from God and virtue, poſſeſs a very extenſive power over this lower world. This however is a point that ought not to be taken for granted. The authors of the Septuagint were not unacquainted with the Greek learning. They could not therefore be ignorant, that the Heathens did not acknowledge any *created* ſpirits; or at leaſt, that according to their eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of theology, the world and every thing in it, was either eternal or begotten, not created. As little reaſon is there to ſuppoſe them ignorant, in what ſenſe the word, demons, was uſed by the Heathens, both in their writings, and in their common diſcourſe. No word in the Greek language could be more familiar to them, eſpecially as applied to the objects of popular adoration, or ſuch human ſpirits as were ſuppoſed to become demons, whether conſidered as good or evil. Now, why ſhould it be preſumed, that theſe writers uſe this word in a ſenſe different from all the Greeks, when ſpeaking upon the ſame ſubject? Beſides, did not the authors of the Septuagint verſion know, (what all the world knew) that the Heathen gods had once been men? Could they be ignorant, that in the books which they tranſlated, and which they acknowledged to be inſpired, theſe gods were repreſented in this their true light? Or, ſhall it be taken for granted, that in open contradiction to the inſpired writers, and in defiance of their own inward convictions, they were capable of affirming, that *all* the Heathen gods were of a different origin from mankind? Such a degree

of extravagance and wickedneſs as this implies, ought not to be charged upon any writers, without the ſtrongeſt proofs. For theſe reaſons, it appears to me moſt probable, that they uſed the word to expreſs ſuch human ſpirits as became demons. And I am confirmed in this opinion, by attending to the particular occaſions on which they uſe it *. As to the other Jews who wrote in the Greek language, they were no ſtrangers to this meaning of demons. We have already had occaſion to explain the ſentiments of Philo †. With reſpect to Joſephus, he ſays expreſsly, " Demons are the ſpirits of wicked men ‡." This ſhews, that in the writings of the Helleniſtic Jews, particularly thoſe who lived near the commencement of the Chriſtian æra, the word is to be underſtood of ſuch departed human ſpirits as became demons.

Is it not natural then to ſuppoſe, that it bears the ſame

* It will be ſhewn below, that the paſſages in the Hebrew text which correſpond to thoſe cited above (p. 132, n. ‡) from the Septuagint, manifeſtly refer to the hero gods of the Heathens. I add here, that when the authors of this verſion ſay, If. lxv. 11. that the Jews " prepared a table to a demon," τῷ δαιμονίῳ; it ſeems to me more natural to underſtand them, as reproaching the Jews with ſacrificing to ſome Heathen demon, than to any fallen angel. See Lowth in loc. and compare Dr. Sykes's Further Enquiry; p. 35.

† See above, page 120.

‡ Τὰ γὰρ καλέμενα δαιμόνια, ταῦτα δὲ πονηρῶν ἐϛιν ἀνθρώπων πνεύματα, De Bel. Jud. l. 7. c. 6. § 3.

ſame meaning in *the New Teſtament?* There the Heathen deities are called demons: "Thoſe things "which the Gentiles ſacrifice, they ſacrifice to de- "vils, or demons *." St. Paul, whoſe language this is, was a perſon of extenſive learning, and well acquainted with the theology of the Gentiles, which repreſented human ſpirits as becoming demons after death. He knew, that theſe demons were the very perſons to whom the Gentiles offered their ſacrifices. At the ſame time he was converſant in thoſe writings of the inſpired prophets, which taught, that the Heathen gods were men and women deceaſed. He himſelf (in imitation of thoſe prophets) diſtinguiſhes Jehovah from them by the title of the *living* ‡ God. Now, if he knew them to belong to the human ſpecies; would he deny that they had been men, and affirm that they were angels? To ſuppoſe that he would, is to charge him, not with error, but with wilful falſehood: a charge that cannot be ſupported, but by putting a ſenſe upon his language, which, to ſay the leaſt, was not the moſt uſual and common one. Beſides, this apoſtle was not only himſelf well acquainted with the theology of the Gentiles, but was

* Δαιμονίοις. The apoſtle adds, "I would not that ye ſhould "have fellowſhip with devils, δαιμονίων, demons. Ye cannot "drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils, δαιμονίων, "demons: ye can not be partakers of the table of the Lord, "and of the table of devils, δαιμονίων, demons," 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

‡ Acts xiv. 15. 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 Theſſ. i. 9.

writing to Gentiles, who knew that, according to their theology, human ſpirits became demons after death; and who would naturally underſtand him as referring to Jupiter, Venus, and other men and women, whom they had once worſhipped under this very character. Would not St. Paul then uſe the word, *demon*, in the ſame ſenſe in which he knew it would be underſtood, by thoſe Gentiles to whom he was writing? If you ſay he borrowed it from the Jews who ſpoke the Greek language, particularly the authors of the Septuagint; you ſuggeſt a new proof of the point we would eſtabliſh: for it muſt be admitted, that he would employ it, as we have ſeen they did, to deſcribe ſuch human ſpirits as were called demons. There are paſſages in St. Paul's writings, and in other places of the New Teſtament, where it cannot bear a different meaning *.

In

* When St. Paul preached to the Athenians Jeſus Chriſt as riſen from the dead; he ſeemed to ſome of his hearers, *a ſetter forth of ſtrange gods*, δαιμονίων, *demons*, (Acts xvii. 18, 22.) which, as our tranſlators themſelves were ſenſible, cannot ſignify *devils*, (in the ordinary acceptation of that word) but muſt denote *deified men*; the Athenians imagining that St. Paul was recommending a new deity, who had once been a man. Nor can it be ſuppoſed, that St. Paul himſelf, in his addreſs to the Athenians, would uſe the word in a ſenſe different from what they did, when he calls them δεισιδαιμονεστέρους, (v. 22.) "perſons much addicted to the worſhip of demons," or gods of human original; for to ſuch gods all the devotion of the Athenians and other Greeks was directed. The worſhip of cannonized ſaints amongſt idolatrous Chriſtians, is called "the doctrine "concerning demons," 1 Tim. iv. 1. explained above, ch. 3. ſect.

In the late controverſy upon this ſubject, both parties ſeem to have committed ſeveral great miſtakes. I ſhall take notice of a very eſſential one, relative to our preſent argument. On the one ſide, it was aſſerted, that demon never ſignifies an evil being, till after the times of Chriſt: whereas the word is indifferent in itſelf, and is uſed in a bad as well as a good ſenſe by very ancient writers *. On the other ſide, it was affirmed, that

ſect. 1. p. 109. And the ſame corruptors of Chriſtianity are reproached, for not repenting of the works of their hands, that "they ſhould not worſhip demons." Rev. ix. 20: which muſt refer to *ſaint worſhip* and *image worſhip:* for who can charge Chriſtians with the worſhip of wicked ſpirits, as ſuch?

* If the firſt demons were all good, as Dr. Sykes aſſerts; it is becauſe the firſt men, (whoſe ſouls they were) the men of the golden age, were all good. For we ſhall ſhew, that the Heathens thought, that the departed ſpirits of good and bad men became reſpectively good and bad demons. There is therefore ground to preſume, that as ſoon as mankind degenerated, their departed ſpirits would be repreſented as wicked and miſchievous, that is, as bad demons. The common or conſtant uſe of demon in the earlieſt ages in a good ſenſe, unleſs when κακος, or ſome ſimilar epithet is joined with it; is owing to its being applied at firſt to the deified ſouls of good men. Plutarch tells us, in his life of Dion, near the beginning, p. 958. ed. Paris. 1624. "that it was the opinion of the "ancients, that evil and miſchievous demons, out of envy and "hatred to good men, oppoſe whatever they do." In his treatiſe concerning Iſis and Oſiris, p. 360. he ſpeaks of demons who had a mixture of virtue and vice in their character, and repreſents Xenocrates and Empedocles as believing there were ſuch demons. From thoſe writings of the ancients which are come down to us, we accordingly find, that they uſed the word

that demons in general, and the bad in particular, were ſpirits of a celeſtial origin, and that it was of the latter, (or of apoſtate angels) that the word was to be underſtood, both in the Septuagint, and in the paſſages of St. Paul cited above. We may allow, (what however has not hitherto been eſtabliſhed by clear and certain * evidence) that in the places under our

word demon in a bad ſenſe, and applied it not only to the principle of evil, but to other malignant ſpirits. Pythagoras held demons who ſent diſeaſes to men and cattle; Diogen. Laert. Vit. Pythag. p. 514. ed. Amſt. And though ſome of the Heathens might regard evils as the inflictions of juſtice; and it is poſſible that κακῶν δαιμων may ſignify ſometimes (and particularly in Homer, as Dr. Sykes contends) an *adverſe* demon; nevertheleſs, the hurtful demons were generally conſidered as violent and cruel in their nature, and were accordingly to be appeaſed by cruel rites. Beſides, they were thought to inſtigate men to wickedneſs. Zaleucus in his preface to his laws, apud Stobæum, ſerm. 42. ſuppoſes, that an evil demon might be preſent with a man, τρέπων πρὸς ἀδικίαν, *to influence him to injuſtice.* Empedocles (according to Plutarch, de Iſ. & Oſir. p. 361, and in lib. περὶ τῦ μὴ δανείζεσθαι.) ſpoke of demons who were puniſhed for their crimes. And Ocellus Lucanus, in a paſſage to be cited immediately, makes expreſs mention of wicked demons. Theſe inſtances are ſufficient to ſhew in general, what alone they are here produced to ſhew, that the moſt ancient writers, believed in bad as well as good demons. Accordingly δαιμονιος freqently occurs in them, as a term of reproach, as well as praiſe.

* It ſeems to me difficult to determine with abſolute certainty, whether demon is uſed in a good or in a bad ſenſe in the lxx. It might, *poſſibly*, be choſen on account of its ambiguity: for the authors of that verſion were not diſpoſed to give

our preſent conſideration, the word is to be taken in a bad ſenſe, and is applied to wicked ſpirits. Nevertheleſs, it cannot be inferred from hence, that theſe wicked ſpirits were originally of a higher order than mankind. For as the ſouls of many good men were thought to become good demons after death; ſo it was a prevailing opinion, that the departed ſouls of many

give offence to the Pagans, amongſt whom they lived; nor were they free themſelves from every tincture of Paganiſm. Were we certain, in what ſenſe it was to be underſtood in the lxx, we ſhould be equally certain of the meaning of it in the writings of St. Paul; inaſmuch as this apoſtle and indeed all the writers of the New Teſtament adopted the ſtyle and diction of the lxx. That in both, demon is to be taken in a bad ſenſe, ſeems to me ſomewhat *probable*, for the following reaſons. Some of the Heathens themſelves inferred from the actions aſcribed to their gods, and the rites by which they were appeaſed, that they were not gods, but evil demons. See Plutarch de Iſ. & Oſir. p. 361, B. p. 362, E. & de defect. Orac. p. 417, C. D. compare Porphyr. de Abſt. l. 2. ſect. 36, 37, 42. The Jews who wrote in the Greek language, uſe demon in a bad ſenſe, particularly Joſephus cited above and the tranſlator of Tobit, ch. iii. 8. ch. vi. 17. Grotius thought "that "the Helleniſts uſed δαίμων in an ill ſenſe, as the Hebrews "did *Baal*; though both originally indifferent in their ſigni-"fication;" Note on Math. iv. 23. Laſtly, the New Teſtament does certainly, on ſome occaſions, by demons mean evil ſpirits, Matth. ix. 34. James ii. 19: and therefore the word may have the ſame meaning, when it is applied to the Heathen gods. On the other hand Philo tells us, that the people ſpoke as commonly of good as of evil demons, ὥσπερ δὲ ἀγαθὺς δαίμονας καὶ κακὺς λέγουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ. De Gigantibus, p. 286. ed. Paris. Philo however more frequently ſpeaks the language and ſentiments of the Platonic philoſophers, than of the Jews.

many bad men became bad demons. Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Stoics, as we learn from Plutarch *, repreſented "heroes as ſouls ſeparated from "their bodies, and as being good or bad according "to their reſpective characters." The Platoniſts commonly held the very ſame language with reſpect to *demons* †. From ſo early a writer as Ocellus Lucanus we learn, that "ſuch as are begotten with in-"jury and intemperance, are wicked, and will be "evil demons ‡. And there is no notion which prevailed more generally over the Heathen world, from the earlieſt ages, than that concerning the power of ghoſts to haunt and torment mankind, particularly the ghoſts of thoſe who died a violent death ‖: which may

* De Placit. Phil. l. 1. c. 8.

† Plerique tamen ex Platonis magiſterio, dæmones putant animas corporeo munere liberatas: laudabilium quoque virorum æthereos dæmones, improborum vero nocentes, Chalchid. in Platon. Tim. c. 135. p. 30. p. 330. Compare Origen contra Celſ. l. 7. 334. Dr. Hammond on Matth. viii. 28. refers to Hieronymus Magius (Miſcell. l. 4. c. 12.) in proof of its having been the opinion of the ancients, that human ſouls were turned into devils. But as I have never ſeen the works of that author, (which, I am informed, are in the Bodleian library at Oxford) I cannot tell what authority he cites.

‡ Εἰ ὃ καὶ γεννήσουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι μεθ' ὕβρεως, καὶ ἀκρασίας, μοχθηροὶ οἱ γενόμενοι, καὶ κακοδαίμονες ἔσονται. Ocellus Lucan. p. 532. ed. Galei.

‖ In Horace's Epodes, l. 5. ep. 5. v. 91. the boy whom the ſorcereſs intended to murther, thus menaces her,

Quin,

may eaſily incline us to believe, that the doctrine of the philoſophers concerning evil men's becoming evil demons after death, was the creed of the vulgar. From the Heathens, the ſame or ſimilar opinions paſſed to the Jews, whoſe doctors taught *, "that the "ſouls of the damned are for ſome time changed in- "to devils, in order to be employed in tormenting "mankind." Joſephus (as we have already ſeen †) affirms, *that demons were the ſouls of wicked men.* Even Aſmodeus (who is often deſcribed as the prince of evil ſpirits, and reckoned the very ſame as Sammael and Belzebub) is repreſented by the Jews, as having for his mother Nahemah, the ſiſter of Tubal-Cain ‡. Some of them taught, that demons were the offſpring of Sammael (the prince of demons) and Eve, before Adam knew her: others ſaid, Adam was their father, and Lilith their mother ||: and ſome

Quin, ubi perire juſſus exſpiravero,
Nocturnus occurram furor;
Petamque vultus umbra curvis unguibus;
Quæ vis Deorum eſt Manium.

Compare Dido's threatening to Æneas, Virg. En. iv. 384; and what Tertullian ſays concerning the aori and the biæothanati, whom the magicians invoked, De Anima, c. 57. p. 305.

* See Calmet's Dictionary, under the article *Demon*; and Theophylact as cited by Grotius on Mat. viii. 28.

† Page 201.

‡ Elias Levita in Lexico ſuo.

|| See Calmet's Dictionary, under the article, *Demon*, Vandale de Origin. ac progreſſu idolat. p. 111, 112, 115, 116. Buxtorf's

ſome might aſſign them a ſtill different origin. It was a common opinion, that demons were the degenerate ſons of God deſcribed by Moſes*, and their iſſue by the daughters of men, the latter eſpecially. To theſe they added the ſouls of other wicked men. Theſe were the demons with which they were beſt acquainted; of whom therefore they moſt frequently ſpeak. Had Dr. Sykes and his opponents attended to theſe ſentiments of antiquity; the former would not have found his account in denying, nor the latter in aſſerting, that demons, in the paſſages in queſtion, (from the Septuagint and the writings of St. Paul,) were wicked ſpirits: for when the Jews uſed the word in a bad ſenſe, they underſtood by it the ſpirits of ſuch wicked men as were thought to be changed into demons. So that whether the tranſlators of the Old, and the writers of the New Teſtament, took the word in a good or a bad ſenſe; the arguments urged above, to ſhew that human ſpirits were intended, hold good.

The *Chriſtian Fathers*, inſtead of contradicting the ſentiments here advanced, (as is generally ſuppoſed) ſeem to me in ſome meaſure to confirm them. There is

Buxtorf's Lexic. Chald. almud. Baſnage's hiſtory of the Jews, Book IV. ch. 11.

* Gen. vi. 2. Some of the Jews miſtook theſe ſons of God for angels; as was obſerved above, p. 42, n. *. Many thought that the angels were firſt corrupted by the love of women; as appears from the Apocryphal book of Enoch. See Calmet and Baſnage.

is no one point, that they more unanimouſly or ſtrenuouſly maintain, than that all the Heathen deities had been men and women *.

Here it will be objected, that the Fathers aſſert, "that the Heathen gods were demons †; and that "by demons they meant fallen angels." In order to our forming juſt conceptions of this ſubject, it will be neceſſary to attend to the proper point, which the Fathers undertook to maintain againſt the Heathens: which was this, "that thoſe beings whom the Hea-"thens regarded as gods, were demons ‡." It was an

* Tertullian in his Apology, c. 10, 11. affirms, that Saturn and Jupiter, and the whole ſwarm of Heathen deities were men, and that they were reprenſented as ſuch by the Pagans themſelves, whoſe conſciences would condemn them, if they did not allow all thoſe whom they worſhipped as gods, once to have been men, omnes iſtos deos veſtros homines fuiſſe. See alſo c. 28, 29. According to Lactantius, l. 3. c. 15. their having no knowledge of any kings before Uranus and Saturn, is the reaſon why theſe were regarded as the moſt ancient divinities. St. Auſtin. (de civit. Dei, l. 6.) ſays, Euhemerus, omnes tales deos, non fabuloſa garrulitate, ſed hiſtorica diligentia, homines fuiſſe, mortaleſque conſcripſit. Vide Minuc. Fel. c. 22. Lactant. l. 1. c. 15. p. 85, 86. l. 2. c. 2. p. 146. Euſeb. de Vit. Conſtant. l. 2. c. 16. l. 3. c. 26. Dem. Evang. l. 8. p. 364. Arnob. paſſim. According to Minucius Felix (p. 121. 122. ed. Davis.) Cyprian (de idol. vanit. p. 12.) and Auſtin (de civ. Dei, l. 8. c. 5, 27.) Leo, the Egyptian chief prieſt, diſcovered to Alexander the Great, that moſt of the Heathen gods had been men.

† Δαιμόνια ἐστι οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνων. Juſt. Mart. c. Trypho. p. 310.

‡ Thus Tertullian addreſſes the Heathens, Ipſi putatis eos eſſe deos, quos nos demones ſcimus. Ad Scap. init. c. 2. Juſtin Martyr

an article of the common creed amongſt the Pagans, that the ſouls of deified men were taken up into heaven, advanced to a ſtate of divine dominion there, and ranked with the immortal gods *. Herein, their deification did properly conſiſt. Theſe gods were commonly regarded as good † beings, whoſe merit ‡ to

Martyr alſo, in his Apology, reproaches the Pagans with miſtaking evil demons for gods. See Tertullian's Apol. c. 22. and de Anima, c. 57.

* Good demons inhabited the higher regions of the air. When they commenced gods, they were exalted to heaven. Diodorus Siculus (l. 1. p. 12. ed. Rhodomani) ranks the gods taken from earth with thoſe in heaven, ἄλλους ἐκ τούτων [τῶν ἐν ἀέρα θεῶν] ἐπιγείους, κ. τ. λ. Arces attigit igneas, Horace, Carm. l. 3. od. 3. v. 10. ſays of Hercules. The Egyptian prieſts (according to Plutarch de Iſ. & Oſir. p. 359.) taught, that the ſouls of their earthly gods, ἐν ἀέρα λάμπειν ἄστρα. They became immortal, according to the golden verſes aſcribed to Pythagoras,

Ἔσσεαι ἀθάνατος θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκ ἔτι θνητός.

The change from a demon into a god, is from *a mutable, paſſible, mortal* nature, into a nature *immutable, impaſſible, and immortal*, Plutarch de defect. Orac. p. 416. See alſo the paſſage from Plutarch cited above, p. 182. and Cicer. de Nat. Deor. l. 2. c. 24.

† Menander ſays, "We muſt not think any demon to be evil, hurtful to a good life, but every god to be good." And Euripides makes Iphigenia (in Taur. v. 391.) ſay, Οὐδένα γὰρ οἶμαι δαιμόνων εἶναι κακόν. Vid. Herc. fur. 1341.

‡ Quos in cælum merita vocaverint, colunto; was part of the Roman law. And from Cicero de Nat. Deor. we learn, that the cuſtom was, Ut beneficiis excellentes viros in cælum fama & voluntate tollerent.

to mankind gave them a title to the honours of divinity. Now it is evident, that the Heathens might aſſert, and Chriſtians deny, their deification; and at the ſame time both of them allow, that they had once been men. When Chriſtians affirmed, that the Heathen gods were demons, I acknowledge, that they uſed the word in a bad ſenſe *, as they generally do on other occaſions, and thought the Scriptures did †. But it will not neceſſarily follow, from their uſing the word in a bad ſenſe, that they applied it to fallen angels: for they might refer it to ſuch human ſpirits as, in thoſe ages, were thought to become evil and miſchievous demons.

It muſt, however, be allowed, that they did believe, as the Heathens alſo did, in demons of a celeſtial origin ‡, who had never been united to human bodies; and that ſeveral of them maintained, that theſe demons were the gods of the Heathens. And inaſmuch as the authority of theſe writers has been

* Origen, c. Celſ. l. 8. p. 377, See alſo p. 234.

† Id. l. 5. p. 234. Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 4. c. 5. St. Aug. de civ. Dei, l. 9. c. 19.

‡ Lactantius, II. 15, ſays, "Triſmegiſtus calls demons, evil "angels: ſo well was he acquainted with this, that they had "been celeſtial beings, but were depraved, and ſo were be-"come terreſtrial." And in ch. 14, he affirms, "that there "are two ſorts of demons, the one celeſtial, the other terreſt-"rial: that the latter are the authors of the ill things that "are done, whoſe prince is the devil, whom Triſmegiſtus calls "the demonarch" (prince of demons.)

often oppoſed to (what we judge to be) the proper meaning of demons in the New Teſtament; it will be worth our while to inquire, what regard is due to it in the caſe before us. The Heathens did not worſhip any ſuch beings as we call fallen angels: it was falſe therefore to affirm, that they did. The Fathers themſelves taught, that the Heathen gods had all been men: they contradicted themſelves therefore when they aſſerted, that they were a different order of beings. Nor is this the only inconſiſtency with which they are chargeable, in relation to the preſent ſubject. They very frequently boaſted, that Chriſtians could compel the Heathen gods to confeſs themſelves to be demons; and that none of them dared to lie to a Chriſtian *. Nevertheleſs theſe gods, inaſmuch as they were human ſpirits, did lie to Chriſtians, when they declared that they were celeſtial demons. The Fathers themſelves conſtantly maintain†, that Saturn, Jupiter, Serapis, Æſculapius, and all the Heathen gods had been mortal men. Now if the Heathen gods had all been men, with what truth could they deny this, and call themſelves fallen angels? Tertullian tells us,

* Edatur hic aliquis ſub tribunalibus veſtris, quem dæmone agi conſtet. Juſſus a quolibet Chriſtiano loqui ſpiritus ille, tam ſe dæmonem confitebitur de vero, quam alibi deum de falſo. Dæmones—Chriſtiano mentiri non audentes. Tertullian. Apol. c. 23. p. 22. Vide etiam Minuc. Fel. c. 27. Cyprian. ad Donat. p. 3. De Idol. Vanit. p. 10. Ad Demetrian. p. 133. Lactant. II. 15.

† Tertullian. Apol. c. 23. Minucius Felix, c. 27. compared with the paſſages cited above, p. 143, note *.

us, that the Heathen gods and demons were only different names of the ſame beings*; and yet on other occaſions, he repreſents the demons as *perſonating*† the Heathen gods: which manifeſtly ſuppoſes that they were different beings. Lactantius‡ affirms, that the very names by which the Heathen gods were worſhipped. were the names of demons; though the whole world knows, that they were the real names of men and women. Laſtly, ſuch of the primitive Chriſtians as aſſert, that the gods of the Heathens were fallen angels, not only contradict certain and evident matter of fact, and their own avowed opinion of the Heathen gods; but they alſo contradict thoſe ſacred writings, which repreſent them as nothing more than mortal men.

* Sed hactenus verba, jam hinc demonſtratio rei ipſius, qua oſtendemus unam eſſe utriuſque nominis qualitatem. Apol. c. 23.

† He ſpeaks of a demon, ſub perſonis defunctorum deliteſcentis. De Anima, c. 57.

‡ "They not only confeſs themſelves to be demons, but "alſo declare their own names by which they are worſhipped "in the temples. Lactant. II. 15. Juſtin Martyr ſays, that "impure ſpirits under various apparitions went in unto the "daughters of men, and defiled boys; and that each of them "was invoked by ſuch a name as he had given to himſelf." Apol. 1. p. 10. ed. Tirlb. He imagined Jupiter, Apollo, &c. were the proper names of the demons: but Tertullian ſeems to have thought, the demons only procured themſelves to be worſhipped under thoſe names, which belonged to deceaſed men and women.

From the Scriptures, it is plain, the Fathers did not borrow their ſentiments concerning the Heathen gods. The ſacred writers do, perhaps, brand as evil demons, thoſe whom the Heathens regarded as *worthies*, and worſhipped as gods: but they never repreſent fallen angels as the gods of Paganiſm, nor as perſonating thoſe gods, nor as paſſing under the ſame names. Why then has the language of the Fathers on this ſubject, been adopted by all ſucceeding ages, with the reverence due only to that of immediate inſpiration? Though I do not remember to have ſeen it taken notice of by others; yet it ſeems highly probable, that this language was borrowed from the Pagan philoſophers. Several of the latter aſſerted, as the former did, that thoſe beings whom the Heathen world worſhipped as gods, were evil demons. Both of them, in ſupport of this aſſertion, urged the ſame arguments; ſuch as the actions aſcribed to the Heathen gods, the rites appointed to placate them, and their oppoſition to the cauſe of true piety. Both taught that evil demons were ſpirits of a celeſtial origin; and that they were inſpirers and authors of prophecies and miracles*. Nor can we wonder, that the

* Plutarch (in his treatiſe de Iſ. & Oſir. p. 360. ed. Paris. 1624.) mentions it as the opinion of the moſt ancient theologiſts, and declares his own approbation of it, that what is related of Oſiris and Iſis, and other hero deities, is not to be conſidered as an account either of gods, or of men; but of certain *great demons*, who tranſcend mankind in power, but, like them, have a mixture of vice in their character. And in his book de Oraculorum defectu, (p. 417.) he argues from the obſcenity

the Fathers ſhould be too ready to adopt the ſentiments and language of the philoſophers. They had been educated in the ſchools of Pagan philoſophy: and who can make ſufficient allowance for the prejudices of education? Certain it is in fact, that upon

nity, cruelty and folly of the worſhip paid to the gods, that it was inſtituted to avert the wrath of *wicked demons*. Compare Plutarch de Iſ. & Oſir. p. 361. Porphyry (de Abſtin. ſect. 36, 37. p. 80, 81.) ſays, that a man who is ſtudious of piety, does not offer animal ſacrifices to the gods, δαίμοσι δὲ, *but to demons*. He deſcribes wicked demons, very much in the manner the Fathers do, as endeavouring to draw the regards of mankind to themſelves, as being ambitious of paſſing for gods, and as calumniating *the beſt deity*, τὸν ἄριστον θεὸν. Sect. 39, 40, 42. p. 83, 84, 85, 86. He affirms, as the Fathers do, that evil demons are nouriſhed by libations and the ſteams of the ſacrifices, ſect. 42. p. 86, and that they perſonate the gods, ſect. 40. p. 84. Philo, who was more properly a Platoniſt than a Jew, had ſaid long before, that "evil ſpirits uſurp the names of angels." De Gigantibus, p. 286. C. ed. Paris. Porphyry (ſect. 41. p. 85.) aſcribes the whole efficacy of magic to the power of evil demons; as the Fathers likewiſe did. There is no ground to aſſert, that Porphyry borrowed his notions from the Chriſtians, to whom he bore an implacable hatred. He ſpeaks agreeably to the principles of the Pythagorean and Platonic philoſophy; nor does he advance any new doctrine. Jamblichus delivers the like ſentiments concerning evil demons (de Myſteriis, Segm. 3. c. 32. et paſſim.) with Porphyry; profeſſing at the ſame time to have borrowed them from the Chaldeans; to whom (I apprehend) they of right belong. J. Ger. Voſſius, in his book de ſectis philoſophorum, ſays, Mea autem hæc ſententia; non poſſe aliunde melius, quam ex hoc opere, quid et Platonici de divinis rebus ſenſerint, cognoſci. Ægyptiorum et Chaldæorum opinionem exprimit. Voſſius is here ſpeaking of Jamblichus de Myſteriis.

their embracing Chriſtianity, though they adopted ſome new opinions, they dropt very few of their old ones; and in too many inſtances, inſtead of rectifying their preconceived opinions by the Scriptures, tortured the Scriptures (as all men are apt to do) to ſupport their preconceived opinions. In the caſe under our preſent conſideration; they were not perhaps governed entirely by prejudices of their own; they are ſuſpected at leaſt of acting in ſome meaſure from a principle of conformity to the prejudices of others; (as will be ſhewn in the ſequel.) However this may be; they ought not to have countenanced an opinion, that was repugnant to revelation, as well as to the common ſenſe of mankind, and ſupported merely by the authority of the moſt ſuperſtitious of all the Pagan philoſophers.

Notwithſtanding the attachment of the Fathers to the Pagan ſyſtem of demonology; ſome of them maintain, and Juſtin Martyr in particular, that demons were "the ſouls of dead men *" When this learned writer is proving, that the ſoul does not die with the body, he argues from the caſe "of thoſe "who are ſeized and tormented by the ſouls of the "deceaſed, whom all call demoniacs and madmen †." Athenagoras, who flouriſhed in the ſecond century, as Juſtin alſo did, reckons "the ſouls of the giants amongſt

* Ψυχαὶ ἀποθανόντων.

† Οἱ ψυχαῖς ἀποθανόντων λαμβανόμενοι, καὶ βιπλέμενοι ἄνθρωποι, ἃς δαιμονολήπτους καὶ μαινομένους καλοῦσι πάντες. Apol. 1. al. 2. p. 65. Paris. 1620. p. 54. ed. Bened. p. 27. ed. Thirlb.

amongſt the demons *." Tatian, indeed, who believed that the human ſoul dies, could not allow, that any human ſouls became demons †: but his reaſoning againſt this notion, is a proof that it was entertained by others. Tertullian likewiſe conceived the ſtate of the ſoul after the death of the body, to be ſuch as ill conſiſted with the idea of demons, who wandered about in the region of the air near the earth. Accordingly we find, that he ſpeaks principally of ſuch demons as were never united to human bodies. Nevertheleſs, even from Tertullian it appears, that there was a current belief in his time of demons that had once been men; and that he himſelf did not wholly reject them. He tells us in his Apology, that "from a corrupted ſtock of angels, there ſprung "a ſtill more degenerate race of demons ‡." It is univerſally allowed, that Tertullian here refers to *the ſons of God* in the hiſtory of Moſes ||, who mixed with the daughters of men, and who were believed to be angels by Tertullian, and by almoſt all the Fa-

* —— καὶ αἱ τῶν γιγάντων ψυχαὶ, οἱ περὶ τὸν κόσμον εἰσὶ πλανώμενοι δαίμονες. Athenag. Apol. p. 28. B.

† Tatian (Orat. contr. Græcos, p. 154.) ſays, "Demons are not the ſouls of men:" and (p. 148.) he affirms, "that they were ejected from the heavenly converſation."

‡ Sed quomodo de angelis quibuſdam, ſua ſponte corruptis, corruptior gens dæmonum evaſerit, &c. Tertullian. Apol. c. 22. p. 21.

|| Gen. vi. 2.

thers of the four firſt centuries *, upon the authority of Philo, Joſephus, and the ancient editions of the ſeptuagint, which had ſubſtituted *the angels of God*, inſtead of *the ſons of God*. So that according to Tertullian, and I believe I may ſay, according to the general ſenſe of thoſe ages, the worſt kind of demons are in part, at leaſt, of human original. In another place, however, Tertullian expreſſes himſelf in the following manner †: "We diſcover (if I be not miſ-"taken) the fallacy of an evil ſpirit, lurking under "the maſks of dead men, by facts; when, during "his being exorciſed, he ſometimes affirms himſelf "to have been a man, one of our progenitors, ſome-"times a gladiator, or one who fought with wild "beaſts ‡, as elſewhere he would ſay he was a god; "being concerned for nothing more than this, that "he

* See Whitby's Strictur. Patrum, in Gen. c. vi. 4. p. 5. Some think the Fathers were drawn into this error, by the authority of the apocryphal book of Enoch.

† Hanc quoque fallaciam ſpiritus nequam ſub perſonis defunctorum delitescentis, niſi fallor, etiam rebus probamus, quum in exorciſmis interdum aliquem ſe ex parentibus hominem ſuis affirmat, interdum gladiatorem, vel beſtiarium, ſicut et alibi deum; nihil magis curans, quam hoc ipſum excludere quod prædicamus, ne facile credamus animas univerſas ad inferos redigi, ut et judicii et reſurrectionis fidem turbet. Et tamen ille dæmon poſtquam circumſtantes circumvenire tentavit, inſtantia divinæ gratiæ victus, id quod in vero eſt, invitus confitebitur. Tertullian de Anima, c. 57. p. 305, 306. ed. Paris.

‡ This confirms what is obſerved above, p. 141. and below, p. 155. concerning ſuch as ſuffered a violent death.

" he may contradict what we preach, and prevent " us from believing that all ſouls go to the ſhades " below *; and this in order to diſturb our faith of " a judgment and a reſurrection. Yet will this de- " mon, after he has tried to delude the company, " be ſo far over-ruled by the preſence of divine grace, " as unwillingly to confeſs himſelf to be what he " really is." Tertullian here contradicts what he himſelf elſewhere advances concerning thoſe demons, who were the iſſue of the daughters of men; as well as what he aſſerts with reſpect to the power of Chriſtians, to compel demons to declare what they truly were, and to prevent them from telling lyes in their preſence. For here a demon, though in the end he owns his real character, is guilty of lying, even under the exorciſm of Chriſtians, by aſſerting he had been a man. It is more material to obſerve farther, 1ſt, That it muſt have been at that time a very common opinion, that demons were the ſouls of dead men: for otherwiſe this evil ſpirit would not have been repreſented as affirming, that he had been *a man*. 2dly, The reaſon aſſigned by Tertullian for rejecting this opinion, was his believing that all ſouls remained in the ſhades below till the day of judgment: which is mentioned amongſt the errors and paradoxes † of this learned writer; and therefore could have no weight

* Or, *to hades*, the region underneath the earth: which according to many of the Heathens, as well as Tertullian, was the region of the dead.

† See Tertullian, p. 306. note b, ed. Paris.

weight with thoſe Chriſtians, who taught, that human ſouls either aſcended the etherial regions, or wandered about the earth, according to their reſpective characters.

The ſentiments concerning the ſtate of ſeparate ſouls, which were entertained by Chriſtians in general, and by Origen in particular, the moſt learned of all the Fathers, were very different from thoſe of Tertullian. Near the beginning of his ſeventh book againſt Celſus, Origen undertakes to ſhew, that the ancient oracles were not inſpired *by any gods*, as the Heathens commonly thought, but on the contrary by *evil demons* *. In proof of this point, he obſerves †, (amongſt other things,) "that all men, "whether Jews or Chriſtians, Greeks or Barba-"rians, believe that the *human* ſoul ſurvives the diſ-"ſolution of the body: that it is agreeable to rea-"ſon to think, that the *pure* ſoul aſcends the pure re-"gions of ether, leaving the groſs body, and its pol-"lutions behind; but that the *wicked* ſoul is borne "downwards by its ſins, flying about the earth, or "living near ſepulchres." He then aſks the following queſtion ‡: "What ſort of ſpirits ſhould we "judge thoſe to be, which are tied down whole ages, "as one may ſay, to particular buildings or places, "either by certain charms, or by their own wicked-"neſs?" that is, Are they ſuch purified human ſpirits as reaſon tells us aſcend the ſublimer regions, and

* Page 333. † Page 334.

‡ Ποδαπὰ χρὴ νομίζειν εἶναι πνεύματα, κ. τ. λ. Ib.

and the Heathens eſteem as gods; or are they thoſe polluted human ſpirits who are detained near this lower earth, and are evil demons? This queſtion does not appear to concern any but human ſpirits; no mention having been made of any other. Origen reſolves this queſtion in the following manner:— "Reaſon tells us, that they ought to be regarded as "wicked ſpirits, who uſe prophecy (a thing of an "indifferent nature in itſelf) to deceive mankind, "and to draw them from the pure worſhip of God *." There has been occaſion to obſerve, that the ancients were of opinion, not only that *wicked* human ſpirits became demons, but alſo that "thoſe who ſuffered a violent death became ſuch." Now from St. Chryſoſtom we learn, that even this was the belief of the meaner people in his time †. And had it not, at that time, been generally thought, that demons were the ſouls of the deceaſed; would demoniacs have ſaid, as from the ſame author we learn they did, that "they were poſſeſſed by the ſoul of ſuch or ſuch a monk ‡?"

The forecited paſſages from the Fathers appear to me to contain a ſufficient proof, that whatever they teach

* Ibid.

† Πολλοὶ τῶν ἀφελεστέρων νομίζουσι τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν βιαίῳ θανάτῳ τελευτώντων δαίμονας γίνεσθαι. De Laz. Serm. 2. tom. 1. p. 727. E.

‡ Τί ἦν, ὅτι οἱ δαίμονες λέγουσι, τὸ μοναχῷ τῷ δεῖνος ἡ ψυχὴ ἐμί, φησι, Chryſoſt. de Lazaro, tom. 1. p. 728. Αὐτοί, φησιν, οἱ δαιμονῶντες βοῶσιν, ὅτι ψυχὴ τοῦ δεῖνος ἐγώ. In Matt. hom. 28. al. 29. tom. 7. p. 336. C.

teach concerning the miraculous powers and operations of celeſtial demons, was borrowed from the Pagans: that many of them did aſſert, that ſome human ſouls after the diſſolution of their bodies became demons: and that for ſeveral ages after the coming of Chriſt, demons did very commonly denote ſuch human ſouls; agreeably to the meaning affixed to them by the ancient Heathens and Jews, and by the apoſtles of Chriſt. The writings of the Fathers, therefore, inſtead of deſtroying, do in ſome meaſure confirm the explication we have given of the demons mentioned in Scripture, as the objects of Pagan devotion. At the ſame time, they bear expreſs teſtimony to this great truth, (the eſtabliſhment of which has been our main view, in what has been hitherto advanced in this ſection,) that all the Heathen gods, except the deified parts and powers of nature, belonged to the human race. The forming a true idea of the Heathen gods, being a matter of no ſmall importance to a juſt defence of the Scripture; we hope to be excuſed, for having taken up ſo much time in diſcuſſing it.

If the foregoing account of the Pagan gods be juſt; there will be no difficulty, in vindicating the cenſures paſſed upon them in the ſacred writings. With regard to the parts and powers of nature, which the Heathen world deified; they are repreſented in Scripture as the creatures of God's power, and the paſſive inſtruments of his decrees *. Even "the ſun, "and

* See above, p. 97.

" and the moon, and the ſtars, and all the hoſt of " heaven," however revered by the Pagans as the chief deities; " the Iſraelites are forbidden to wor- " ſhip and ſerve; becauſe Jehovah, their God, pla- " ced them in the firmament of heaven;" not for the uſe of any one particular nation, but " for the com- " mon benefit of the whole human race *." It is extraordinary that Moſes, at a time when the world was univerſally regarded as animated and divine, and the elements and the heavenly bodies were thought to poſſeſs an internal power to exert themſelves in all their admirable effects; it is very extraordinary, that Moſes, at this time, ſhould diſcover, publiſh, and (by ſuitable miracles) confirm the oppoſite doctrine. His doctrine is perfectly agreeable to the modern philoſophy, which repreſents the whole natural world as a merely material, inert, inactive thing, without any wiſdom or power of its own, and reſiſting any change of ſtate, whether of reſt or motion; and which muſt therefore be continually upheld and directed by the wiſdom and power of God, to whom the whole train of natural cauſes and effects is to be aſcribed. The doctrine alone of Moſes, ſo remote from the ſentiments and philoſophy of his age, and ſo agreeable to truth, creates a ſtrong preſumption of his having received it by immediate revelation.

As to the other gods of Paganiſm, whether they were ſuch human ſouls as became demons, or (as ſome

* Deut. iv. 19. compared with Gen. i. 17.

ſome apprehend) created ſpirits of a ſuperior order; we have already * ſeen, that the Scripture gives us ſuch a view of them, as is inconſiſtent either with their inſpiring prophecies or working miracles. And it will be ſhewn in the ſequel, that all ſupernatural effects are referred to God alone by the ſacred writers. Is it poſſible for them to contradict themſelves, as they muſt do, if they aſcribe ſuch effects to the Heathen gods? But ſo far are they from doing this, that they conſtantly repreſent thoſe gods as utterly impotent and inſignificant; either as having no real exiſtence, or no more power than if they did not exiſt. They call them *vanities* †, things of no kind of value or efficacy. Nor is this cenſure confined to a part only of the Heathen gods; it is extended to all, without a ſingle exception. "They are ALL vanity ‡." "ALL the gods of the nations are idols, or nothings ‖:" not powerful evil ſpirits, but mere nullities. In this manner, the ancient prophets of God ſpoke of the Pagan deities; and the apoſtles of Chriſt uſed the ſame language: "We know that an "idol

* Ch. 3. ſect. 1.

† Deut. xxxii. 21. 1 King. xvi. 13, 26. Jerem. viii. 19. ch. xiv. 22. ch. xviii. 15. In 1 Sam. xii. 21. they are called "vain things which cannot profit." They are called "lying vanities," Pſ. xxxi. 6.

‡ Iſ. xli. 29. Jerem. x. 8.

‖ Heb. Elilim, *nothings*, or things of no value. Pſ. xcvi. 5. (Compare Job xiii. 4.) See alſo Levit. xix. 4. 1 Chron. xvi. 26. Ezek. xxx. 13. and compare 1 Kings xviii. 27. Iſ. xlv. 5.

" idol is nothing in the world *." This is not to be underſtood of the mere images of the gods: for the Heathens did not regard thoſe images, in themſelves conſidered, as real gods. They believed them to be the repreſentatives and the receptacles † of their gods, and in this view they ſpoke of them as gods, and the objects of divine worſhip; and it is in reference to the divine powers ſuppoſed to reſide in them, that the Scriptures affirm, that they are nothing. On all occaſions, the ſacred writers deride theſe pretended reſidences of the Heathen deities, as mere earthly materials, poliſhed by the hand of the artificer, and the deities themſelves as equally void of underſtanding, or rather as being nothing diſtinct from theſe ſenſeleſs materials, and exiſting only in the imagination of their deluded worſhippers. " The ſtock is a doc-" trine of vanities ‡." " Their idols are ſilver and " gold, or wood and ſtone, the work of mens hands, " which neither ſee, nor hear, nor eat, nor ſmell ||." Agreeably hereto the Scripture repreſents the votaries of theſe divinities as perſons utterly loſt to reaſon, and

* 1 Cor. viii. 4. ch. x. 19.

† Various ceremonies were uſed, to induce the gods to take up their reſidence in the temples and ſtatues erected to receive them. See Arnob. l. 6. p. 203, 207. Sozom. H. E. l. 7. p. 724. Origen, c. Celſ. l. 7. p. 378.

‡ Jerem. x. 8.

|| Deut. iv. 28. Pſ. xcvii. 7. Pſ. cxv. 4. Pſ. cxxxv. 15. Iſ. xl. 18. ch. xlii. 17. ch. xliv. 9. Jerem. ii. 27. ch. x. 3. Dan. v. 4, 23. Habak. ii. 18. Acts xviii. 29. 1 Cor. viii. 4. ch. x. 19. ch. xii. 2. 1 Theſſ. i. 9.

and without a ſhadow of excuſe. " They are altogether brutiſh and fooliſh," and diſcover no more underſtanding than the idols they make *.

Oracles, prophecies, prodigies were aſcribed by the Heathens to their demons: and on their favour the good or evil ſtate of mens lives was thought to depend. This perſuaſion was the ground of their worſhip. And the proper point in diſpute between idolaters and the prophets of the true God, was, whether that perſuaſion was ſupported by *facts*. We find the meſſengers of God challenging idolaters, to juſtify their worſhip of idols; and the idol gods themſelves, to give proof of their divinity, by a diſplay of knowledge, or by ſome exertion of power, ſuch as was either hurtful or beneficial to mankind; and even admitting, that by ſuch a diſplay of their power or knowledge, the Heathen deities would have eſtabliſhed their claim to divinity, and their title to the homage of mankind. " Produce your cauſe, ſaith " the Lord, bring forth your ſtrong reaſons.—Let " them ſhew the former things what they be, that " we may conſider them, and know the latter end " of them:" produce your ancient oracles, that we may judge whether they were fulfilled by correſpondent events; *or*, now " declare to us things for to " come. Shew us things for to come hereafter, that " we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good, or " do evil, that we may be diſmayed," that it may appear

* Jerem. x. 8. Pſ. cxv. 8. Pſ. cxxxv. 18. Habak. ii. 18, 19.

appear ye have, what your votaries aſſert, a title to the reverence and worſhip of mankind. "Behold, ye are nothing, and your work of nought*;" and therefore there can be no ſhadow of reaſon for paying you homage. How very different is this language of the ancient prophets, from that of our learned moderns, who tell us, that idolatry cannot poſſibly be juſtified by any miracles, however numerous or ſplendid; and that whatever power over mankind the Heathen gods might poſſeſs, they could have no right to worſhip? The prophets would have allowed their title to worſhip, had they admitted their power†. Their utter impotence is the only reaſon of the Scripture's remonſtrating againſt paying them homage. I add, that theſe remonſtrances of Scripture, which are frequently repeated‡, are confirmed by facts, by many ſtriking teſtimonies of the utter inability of the Heathen deities, to interpoſe either for the conviction of gainſayers, or for the benefit of their worſhippers, or in vindication of their own honour. They could not interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream||, nor the hand-writing upon the wall of Bel-

 ſhazzar's

* If. xli. 21, 24.

† The reaſoning urged above, p. 76, 77, 78, may ſerve to juſtify the deciſion of this caſe by the prophets.

‡ Jerem. x. 3, 5, 15. If. xliii. 8. ch. xliv. 7. ch. xlv. 16, 20. ch. xlvi. 5. ch. xlviii. 3. 1 Cor. viii. 4. ch. x. 19. ch. xii. 2. 1 Theſſ. i. 9.

|| Dan. iv. 7.

ſhazzar's palace *; nor were they able to anſwer by fire, in the public trial between their own prophets, and the prophet of Jehovah †; though on theſe ſeveral occaſions, but eſpecially the laſt, all their credit was at ſtake. Nor did they oppoſe (how much ſoever it might be their intereſt to do it) any miracles of their own, to thoſe either of Moſes or the Meſſiah; as we hope to ſhew in the ſequel.

In oppoſition to all this evidence, it has been aſſerted, that the ſyſtem of Pagan idolatry was ſupported by prophecies and miracles, delivered and performed, not by the fictitious deities of the Heathens, but by *devils*, or wicked demons of a higher order than mankind, who perſonated the gods, lurked within their conſecrated images and ſtatues, inſpired the vates, animated the fibres of the entrails of victims, governed

* Dan. v. 7.

† 1 Kings xviii. If ſpirits (as learned men have affirmed) can do *inviſibly*, all that men can do *viſibly*; why, in the conteſt related in this chapter, did not evil ſpirits bring fire in a ſecret manner from ſome neighbouring place to the altar, to conſume what was laid upon it? There ſeems to be no *peculiar* difficulty in ſuch a miracle.

Should any object to what is here urged concerning the impotence of the Heathen gods, that in 2 Chron. xxviii. 23, the ſacred hiſtorian is repreſented as ſaying, that "the gods of Damaſcus ſmote Ahaz:" I anſwer in the words of Mr. Halett (V. 2. p. 79.) "All this difficulty is avoided, if we follow the "old Hebrew copies, from which the Greek tranſlation was "made, which reads thus, And king Ahaz ſaid, I will ſeek to "the gods of Damaſcus who ſmote me."

governed the flight of birds, guided the lots, framed the oracles, and exerted themſelves to the utmoſt in promoting idolatry, in order to involve men in the guilt of it, to draw all adoration to themſelves, to ſecure proper food and nouriſhment from the rich ſteams and blood of the victims, which were offered to them, and hereby to ſtrengthen themſelves for the enjoyment of their luſtful pleaſures with boys and women. It has been farther aſſerted, that theſe wicked ſpirits were, properly ſpeaking, the gods of the Heathens; rather than thoſe imaginary beings, whom they ſeemed to themſelves to worſhip. In ſupport of theſe aſſertions, appeal is made to the writings of the Fathers, and the authority of Scripture.

For the honour of human nature, who would not wiſh that ſuch extravagant opinions as theſe had never been broached by any writers? Nevertheleſs, it muſt be owned, they are clearly contained in the writings of the Fathers †. Theſe opinions however are there only aſſerted, not proved; and perhaps were never really believed, by the very perſons who maintained them, and upon whoſe authority alone they have been received in ſucceeding ages. For the Fathers, though they ſometimes taught, or allowed, that

† Juſtin Mart. Apol. p. 113. ed. Thirlb. Tertullian de anima, c. 57. Minucius Felix, c. 27. Cyprian de Idolor. Van. p. 206. Arnob. c. Gent. l. 1. 26. Lactant. de Orig. Error. l. 2. c. 16. De vera Sapient. l. 8. c. 16. ed. Spark, p. 399. Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 5. c. 4. St. Auguſt. de Civ. Dei, l. 8. *c.* 16. See alſo Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 66, 70, 77. and Mede's works, p. 680, 681.

Pagan idolatry was supported by oracles and miracles; do nevertheless on other occasions confess or clearly intimate, that Paganism had no other support, than human craft and imposture *. They pretended, indeed, that any Christian was able to compel the Heathen gods to confess themselves to be devils, as well as to eject † them from the bodies of men; but every one now knows, that there was no miracle ‡ in the case. To me it seems to be a matter of no great importance, what sentiments the Fathers entertained on the subject under our consideration; and therefore we will proceed to examine those of the sacred writers. Several general reasons have been already || suggested, to shew how unlikely it is, that the Scriptures should assert or allow, that idolatry was supported by the miraculous interposition of any wicked spirits; whether they did or did not counterfeit the souls of men

* Origen, c. Cels. p. 333. Euseb. Præp. l. 4. c. 1, 2, 3. Clemens Alexandrinus, Strom. l. 3. See Fontenelle's Hist. of Oracles, ch. 9. p. 76. and Clerici Hist. Eccles. prolegom. p. 54. With regard to the residence of invisible beings in the consecrated images of the Heathens; it is frequently treated by the ancient apologists with the scorn it so well deserved. See Arnob. l. 6. p. 200. Lactant. l. 2. p. 147. Perhaps one reason why on some occasions the Fathers allow, that Paganism was supported by miracles, was their finding the Pagans more disposed to refer them to evil agents, than to disbelieve their reality.

† See Dr. Whitby's general preface to the epistles, p. xxvi.

‡ See Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 82, &c.

|| See above, p. 157.

men deceaſed. To what has been already offered, I would add the few following obſervations on the caſe before us.

1ſt, The Scripture has never given the leaſt intimation, that the gods of the Heathens were of two different kinds, the one ſuch as they *ſeemed to themſelves* to worſhip, the other the *real* objects of their devotion. Much leſs has the Scripture aſſerted or intimated, that, though the former were utterly impotent, the latter were powerful wicked ſpirits, who were always promoting idolatry by prophecies, prodigies, and miracles. Now, is it credible, that the prophets of God, who were in the higheſt degree anxious for the welfare of the Iſraelites, ſhould never give them any notice of their hourly danger from ſuch powerful demons? and that they ſhould tell the people, they had nothing to fear or hope from the gods they were ſo prone to worſhip; without dropping a ſingle hint that thoſe gods had a thouſand abettors, who were allowed to work miracles, in order to involve them in the guilt of idolatry? This will appear ſtill more incredible, if we conſider, 2dly, That had the claims of the Heathen deities been ſupported by other inviſible agents, aſſuming their names, and acting their parts: this would have been the very ſame thing, *to the apprehenſions of mankind*, as if thoſe deities had themſelves interpoſed in ſupport of their own divinity. For had miracles been performed in the name of the Heathen gods: the ſpectators muſt have referred them to thoſe gods; rather than to any other beings, of whom they were entirely ignorant. And if to the ſpectators, the Heathen gods *neceſſarily appeared*

to poſſeſs a miraculous power; would not this have produced, and very juſtly too, the ſame effect as if they had *really* poſſeſſed it? If the exerciſe therefore of this power, for the benefit or to the prejudice of mankind, by the idol gods, would have juſtified the worſhip of them, (as the prophets of God allow it would;) the exerciſe of the ſame power by others, under the circumſtances here ſuppoſed, would have done ſo too. 3dly, The prophets of God could not with truth or ſincerity affirm, that apoſtate angels were, properly ſpeaking, the gods of the Heathens; becauſe they repreſent their gods as *dead men*. Nor do they ſpeak of them in this manner, in order to accommodate themſelves to the common opinion of the Heathens concerning them, as ſome have imagined *; for the Heathens regarded them as *deified ſouls of their worthies*. They call them dead men; becauſe they were really and truly ſuch; and not evil ſpirits maſking themſelves under their names. 4thly, They could not without the groſſeſt violation of truth, repreſent the ſtatues and images of the Heathen deities as mere ſenſeleſs materials, if they were inhabited by *any* ſpiritual beings whatſoever. 5thly, Moſt fallacious and dangerous would it have been in the prophets, to inculcate it perpetually upon the Iſraelites as a moſt certain and evident truth, that all the Heathen gods were imaginary beings, who had no *exiſtence*, or no degree of *power* over mankind; without informing them at the ſame time, (what it concerned them

* See above, p. 132.

them much to know, if it was true,) that the real objects of the Heathen worſhip, were poſſeſſed even of miraculous powers, which they were continually exerting to the deception of the human race. This would have been egregious trifling on a moſt ſolemn occaſion, and groſs prevarication: it would have been not only leaving the people in ignorance of their danger, but deceiving them into a falſe and fatal opinion of their ſafety. Include in the number of the Heathen gods whatever ſpirits you pleaſe, apoſtate angels of every rank and order, as well as human ſouls; that declaration of God muſt hold true, "They are all vanity, their works are nothing *." If you chuſe to ſay, that the prophets of God conceived the Heathen deities to be devils, in the ſenſe in which the word is uſed at preſent; you make them deny, that devils have any power at all: for in reference to all the Heathen deities, they thus admoniſh the Iſraelites, "Be not afraid of them, for they "cannot do evil, neither alſo is it in them to do "good †."

It is true, indeed, that both according to the ancient and modern verſions of the Bible, the Heathen gods are repreſented as devils in that ſacred volume. But theſe verſions do great injuſtice to the original; if by devils you mean a diſtinct order of beings from human ſouls. Let us examine the ſeveral paſſages, where the Heathen gods are deſcribed as devils, in the Engliſh tranſlation.

* Iſaiah xli. 29. † Jerem. x. 5.

Moſes, in his *prophetic* hymn concerning the apoſtacy of the Iſraelites, takes notice of it as a proof and aggravation of their idolatrous diſpoſition, "that they ſacrificed unto devils," (*ſchedim*,) whom he calls "new gods that came newly up, whom they "knew not, and their fathers feared not *." The Pſalmiſt in like manner thus reproaches them: "Yea, they ſacrificed their ſons and their daughters "unto devils †," (*ſchedim*). If all the Pagan gods were devils, why are the *ſchedim* diſtinguiſhed from their other gods? Why are they called *new* to the Iſraelites, who had of old worſhipped the Pagan deities ‡? Why is the worſhip of theſe *ſchedim* mentioned as matter of *peculiar* reproach? And if theſe *ſchedim* were devils, who have a real and extenſive power over mankind; why are they called *vanities* and *idols* ‖? The word, *ſchedim*, is derived from a verb § which ſignifies *to lay waſte*, *to deſtroy*, and ought to have been rendered, *the deſtroyers*. It expreſſes the ſuppoſed cruel nature and character of theſe falſe gods, who were thought to delight in, and who were accordingly worſhipped by, *the deſtruction* of the human ſpecies, and who required, as appears from the context, even "the blood of their ſons

* Deut. xxxii. 17.

† Pſ. cvi. 37.

‡ Gen. xxxv. 2, 4. Joſh. xxiv. 2.

‖ Deut. xxxii. 21. Pſ. cvi. 36.

§ שדד

ſons and daughters*." Who the gods were, that were worſhipped by human ſacrifices, all hiſtory informs us; and ſo has the Pſalmiſt in the moſt expreſs terms†, "They ate the ſacrifices of the dead." They were the great warriors, who in their mortal ſtate delighted in the ſlaughter of the human race. The revolt of the Iſraelites from the worſhip of God their *Saviour*, to that of theſe *waſters* and *deſtroyers* of mankind, argued the higheſt degree of folly and wickedneſs. This worſhip was *new* to the Iſraelites, what they had never practiſed either in Egypt, or before they went into that country; but what they afterwards learnt of the Canaanites. Accordingly the ſchedim are expreſsly called by the Pſalmiſt, "the idols of Canaan‡." What one circumſtance is there that can lead us to ſuppoſe, that either Moſes or the Pſalmiſt, in the forecited paſſages, are ſpeaking of *devils*, in the common acceptation of that word?

The ſame defect either of candour or judgment, our tranſlators have ſhewn in the explication of another word, which they render *devils*. "They ſhall "no more offer their ſacrifices unto devils," *ſeirim*, or, *ſehirim*||. This prohibition of Moſes to the Iſraelites after they had left Egypt, implies that they had, during their ſtay there, defiled themſelves with that

* Pſalm cvi. 38.

† V. 28. See the learned Mr. Merrick's annotations on the Pſalms, p. 218.

‡ Pſalm cvi. 38.

|| Levit. xvii. 7.

that particular ſpecies of idolatry here condemned. And from other paſſages of Scripture, it ſufficiently appears, that the Iſraelites were no ſtrangers to the worſhip of the Egyptian deities *. It is allowed, that the word, *ſeirim*, ſignifies *hairy beings*, or *goats* †. And the learned Bochart ‡ has fully ſhewn, that the *ſacred* animals of Egypt were *hairy;* and that the *goat* in particular was worſhipped, (on the ſame account as *Priapus* was amongſt the *Greeks;*) and that Pan was repreſented under the image of this animal. It is plain, therefore, that as the *ſchedim* were the idols of Canaan, ſo the *ſeirim* were the idols of Egypt. This will more clearly appear from another place in which this latter word occurs: "He (Jeroboam) ordained him prieſts for the high places, "and for the devils, (*ſeirim*, the goats,) and for the "calves he had made ‖." Did Jeroboam make devils,

* Joſh. xxiv. 14. Ezek. xx. 7. ch. xxiii. 2, 3. Acts viii. 39.

† In Levit. iv. and ch. xvi. and other places, it ſignifies a goat. In many places it ſignifies *hair* or *hairy*. Lev. xiii. 10, 25, 26, 30, 32. Gen. xxv. 25. Pſalm lxviii. 21. The word alſo occurs, Iſ. xiii. 21. where the prophet is foretelling the utter deſtruction and deſolation of Babylon: "The ſatyrs," the ſeirim, "the goats or hairy creatures ſhall dance there;" i. e. it ſhall be inhabited by beaſts, and not men. And in Iſ. xxxiv. 14. this word is rendered *ſatyrs*, where the prophet is deſcribing the deſolation of Idumea, repreſenting it as the haunt of goats and other wild beaſts.

‡ Hieroz. l. 2. c. 53.

‖ 2 Chron. xi. 15.

vils, or the ſtatues and images of devils? The word, *ſeirim*, (*goats*,) no more ſignifies devils, than the original word tranſlated *calves*, or any other word throughout the Bible. Some very learned † men indeed plead, that devils were repreſented by goats, becauſe they appeared to mankind in the form of theſe animals. But, till they produce ſome better authority, than the reports of witches, and the fables of the Heathens concerning fauns and ſatyrs, in proof of the devil's appearing in the ſhape of goats; this plea cannot be admitted. What the hiſtorian affirms, is plainly this; that Jeroboam lately returned from Egypt, eſtabliſhed the worſhip of the deities of that country, which was eminently that of goats and calves; or at leaſt ſet up the images of theſe animals as ſymbols of the Divinity. There could be no reference to devils, as this word is now underſtood; becauſe the Iſraelites are never charged by their prophets, with ſo deteſtable a ſpecies of idolatry, as the worſhip of devils. The inſtitution of ſuch worſhip would not have ſuited with the policy of Jeroboam, who was deſirous of attaching the Iſraelites to himſelf. Nor did the Egyptians, whoſe example Jeroboam copied, ever repreſent devils under the figures of goats and calves.

With regard to the paſſages in the New Teſtament, in which the Heathen gods are ſtyled *devils*, or (according to the original) *demons* ‡; it has already been ſhewn,

† See Patrick in particular.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 20, 21, cited above, p. 135.

ſhewn *, that thereby we are to underſtand ſuch human ſpirits as were ſuppoſed to be converted into demons. It is ſcarce neceſſary to obſerve, that when St. Paul in theſe paſſages calls the objects of Pagan worſhip, demons, and in other places, *gods* and *lords* †; it is merely for the ſake of deſcribing them by their uſual appellations, or to expreſs what the Heathens believed them to be; without having any intention of allowing them any real power or divinity: for he elſewhere upbraids them as vanities ‡, and mere nullities ||. This likewiſe is the view which all the ſacred writers give us of the gods of Paganiſm: a view abſolutely inconſiſtent with their poſſeſſing a power of working miracles.

SECT.

* Page 135, 136.

† "There be gods many, and lords many," i. e. ſuch as are ſo called, 1 Cor. viii. 5. The lords here ſpoken of, anſwer to *Baalim* in the Old Teſtament, and to *demons* in the New; the ſuppoſed diſpenſers of good and evil according to the Pagans. But Chriſtians acknowlege only one God, and one Lord.

‡ Acts xiv. 15.

|| 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6.

SECT. III.

The character and pretenſions of the magicians, diviners and ſorcerers of antiquity, examined; with the Scripture account concerning them. And the various pleas alledged by Chriſtians in ſupport of the credit, and efficacy of the ancient magic, refuted.

IT will be my buſineſs in this ſection to ſhew, that the *magicians*, *diviners* and *ſorcerers* of antiquity, who pretended, by the aſſiſtance of the Heathen deities, to foretel future events or to work miracles, are branded in Scripture as mere impoſtors, incapable of ſupporting their pretenſions by any works or predictions beyond human power or ſkill. It is natural to ſuppoſe this, from what has been advanced in the foregoing ſection; but it will admit of a much fuller confirmation. In order to our clearly diſcerning the juſtice, with which the Scriptures cenſure and explode all the Pagan pretences to prophecy and miracles; it will not be improper to inveſtigate the falſe principles upon which they were founded, the knowlege of which will be of ſervice to us on ſeveral occaſions, in the ſequel of the argument.

The magi were originally the prieſts of the gods *, and

* Plato's Alcibiades, 1. Lucian ἐν Μακροβίοις. Porphyry, in his book, de Abſtinent. l. 4. § 16, ſays, Παρὰ γε μὲν τοῖς Πέρσαις, οἱ περὶ τὸ θεῖον σεφοὶ, καὶ τότε θεράποντες, Μάγοι μὲν προσαγορεύονται. See alſo Plato apud Apul. Apol. p. 290, and Dio Chryſoſtomus, Orat. 36. F. 499.

and the profeſſors of ſcience, particularly phyſic and aſtrology *. They undertook to interpret dreams, to foretel future events, and to accompliſh many wonderful things, by their ſuperior knowledge of the ſecret powers of nature, of the virtues of plants and minerals, and of the motions and influences of the ſtars. Diodorus Siculus informs us, that "the prieſts "of Egypt foretold future events by aſtrology, and "the inſpection of ſacrifices †." And from the ſame author we learn ‡, "that the Egyptians obſerved "with great exactneſs, the motions, revolutions and "ſtations of the planets, and their reſpective power "and operation in the generation of animals, and "the production of good and evil; that they fore-"tel very frequently future events ‖; and that by long "obſervation they foreknow many things, which are "commonly thought to be beyond the reach of hu-"man knowlege." Cicero § gives us the ſame account

* Plin. Nat. Hiſt. l. 30. c. 1.

† Διὰ τῆς ἀστρολογίας καὶ τῆς ἱεροσκοπίας, p. 66. D. ed. Rhodomani.

‡ Τάς τε τῶν πλανήτων ἀστέρων κινήσεις καὶ περιόδους καὶ σημεῖωσις, ἔτι δὲ τὰς ἑκάστου δυνάμεις πρὸς τὰς τῶν ζώων γενέσεις, τίνων ἐσὶν ἀγαθῶν ἢ κακῶν ἀπεργαστικαὶ, φιλοτιμότατα παρατετηρήκασι, κ. τ. λ. p. 73.

‖ Particularly, ſcarcity and plenty, epidemical diſeaſes, earthquakes, and comets, (which have been generally thought to portend ſome extraordinary events) as well as the accidents of private life.

§ Principio Aſſyrii, trajectiones motuſque ſtellarum obſervaverunt: quibus notatis, quid cuique ſignificaretur, memoriæ prodiderunt.

count of theſe men, both amongſt the Egyptians, and other ancient nations. To the former of whom, as the original diſcoverers, Herodotus aſcribes, " the " aſcertaining the month and day which belonged to " each particular deity; and the foretelling the fu- " ture diſpoſitions and fortunes of men, by obſerving " the day on which each perſon was born *." He alſo acquaint us †, " that when a prodigy happens, " they keep an account of the events which ſucceed " it; and conclude that when a like prodigy appears, " the ſame events will happen after it." In Cicero's firſt book of divination, in which the ſeveral kinds of it are explained and defended; it is reſolved into many cauſes very different from that of an immediate revelation from ſome ſpiritual being. He divides divination into *artificial* and *natural*. Under divination by *art* and obſervation, he comprehends that drawn from the inſpection of the entrails of victims, the interpretation of prodigies and thunders, the uſe of

prodiderunt. Chaldæi—diuturna obſervatione ſiderum, ſcientiam putantur effeciſſe, ut prædici poſſet, quid cuique eventurum, & quo quiſque fato natus eſſet. Eandem artem etiam Ægyptii, &c. Cicero de Divinat. l. 1. c. 1. According to Diodorus Siculus, p. 73, the Chaldeans were a colony of Egyptians, who had been inſtructed in aſtrology by the prieſts of Egypt.

* Euterpe. c. 82.

† Γενομένου γὰρ τέρατος, φυλάσσουσι γραφόμενοι τῶν ποσαῖνον· καὶ ἢν κοτε ὕστερον παραπλήσιον τούτῳ γένηται, καὶ τὰ τοῦτο νομίζουσι ἀποβήσεσθαι. Herodot. ubi ſupra.

of auſpices, the practices of lots and aſtrological predictions, and all the varieties of preſages and ſigns. In a word, as in almoſt every object they looked for ſignifications of the divine purpoſes, and the preſages or indications of future events; ſo in the right underſtanding of theſe *external* ſigns, conſiſted divination by art. By *natural* divination (which was *internal*) Cicero means, the foreſight of future events by the mind under a particular emotion and agitation; as in *dreaming*, or when actuated by *vaticinations* or *propheſyings by fury;* and ſuch *oracles* as proceeded from a *divine inſtinct and afflatus* *. It was thought, that divination by fury (or when the mind was in an extacy) might be excited by certain vapours or exhalations of the earth; and that a draught of water from a particular ſpring would render perſons oracular and prophetical †. It was alſo aſſerted, that prodigies and ſigns

* Cicero de divinat. l. 1. c. 2, 6, 18, 49, 53.

† Of the *waters* which inſpired the poets and prophets, mention is made by Statius Silv. I. II. 6. Et de Pieriis vocalem fontibus undam; by Anacreon, xiii, Ἀάλου πιόντες ὕδωρ; by Tacitus, Hauſta fontis arcani aqua,—edit reſponſa; (Annals, l. 2. c. 54.) and by Pliny, l. 2. c. 103. l. 5. c. 29. *Oracular exhalations* are ſpoken of in Cicero, de Div. l. 1. c. 50, Credo etiam anhelitus quoſdam fuiſſe terrarum, quibus inflatæ mentes oracula funderent. The ſtrange agitations into which the goats of Coretas, and afterwards Coretas himſelf fell, upon their approaching the top of a cavern on the hill of Parnaſſus, and receiving the influence of the ſubterranean blaſt; gave occaſion to the building the temple, and eſtabliſhing the famous oracle at Delphi. It was ſuppoſed, that "that virtue of the earth, "which agitates the mind of the prieſteſs of Apollo with a di-

"vine

" vine afflatus, may in length of time vaniſh." Poteſt vis illa terræ, quæ mentem Pythiæ divino afflatu concitabat, evanuiſſe vetuſtate, ut quoſdam exaruiſſe amnes, aut in alium curſum contortos & deflexos videmus. c. 19. Strabo likewiſe ſpeaking concerning the Delphic Oracle, ſays, there iſſued out of a cavity πνεῦμα ἐνθουσιαστικὸν, *an enthuſiaſtic gale*, or *wind*, rendering perſons prophetical. But this matter is treated at large in Plutarch de defectu Oraculorum, where he allows indeed that demons might be appointed by the gods to preſide over divination and oracles, (p. 418. D. & p. 436. F.) and to be the guardians of the temperature of thoſe exhalations, to which they are aſcribed; but at the ſame time it is aſſerted, that the ſoul is naturally endued with the faculty of divining, and that certain exhalations of the earth were the means of exciting that prophetic power or virtue. This *prophetical blaſt* or *ſpirit of divination* (for it is called μαντικὸν ῥεῦμα ἢ πνεῦμα, p. 432.) was thought to owe its virtue to the ſun or Apollo, (for they were both eſteemed to be the ſame god, p. 433. D. p. 434. F.) When the inſpiration was too ſtrong, the propheteſs was ſaid to be poſſeſſed with a *dumb and evil ſpirit*, p. 438. B. vide p. 431—438. From Ammianus Marcellinus we learn, that divination was aſcribed to the " ſpirit of all the elements, and " to the ſubſtantial powers, which were appeaſed by different " rites, and over which the goddeſs Themis was ſaid to pre- " ſide." Elementorum omnium ſpiritus, utpote perennium corporum præſentiendi (*al.* præſentienti) motu ſemper & ubique vigens, ex his quæ per diſciplinas varias affectamus, participat nobiſcum munera divinandi: & ſubſtantiales poteſtates ritu diverſo placatæ, velut ex perpetuis fontium venis vaticina mortalitati ſuppeditant verba, quibus numen præeſſe dicitur Themidis: quam ex eo, quod fixa fatali lege decreta præſcire facit in poſterum, que θεσμὸν fermo Græcus appellat, ita cognominatam, in cubili ſolioque Jovis vigoris vivifici theologi veteres collocarunt. Auguria & auſpicia non volucrum arbitrio futura neſcientium colliguntur: (nec enim hoc vel inſipiens quiſquam dicet) ſed volatus avium dirigit Deus, ut roſtrum ſonans, aut prætervolans pinna turbido meatu vel leni futura præ-

ſigns might be procured by diſcipline *. So that divination was a ſcience, in which they thought themſelves ſure of ſucceſs, if they proceeded according to certain eſtabliſhed rules.

We are not, however, from hence to infer, as ſome have done, that the ancient magicians or prieſts were mere naturaliſts and aſtrologers. There have indeed been Atheiſts and Chriſtians, who have been much addicted to divination and aſtrology †; but theſe arts amongſt the Pagan nations were founded in their ſyſtem of theology. Great things, it was thought, might be produced in nature; but not for that reaſon without the gods: for they had deified all the parts and powers of nature ‡, and more eſpecially the heavenly bodies:

monſtret.—Extis item pecudum attenti fatidicis, in ſpecies converti ſuetis innumeras, accidentia ſciunt.—Aperiunt tunc quoque ventura, cum æſtuant hominum corda, ſed loquuntur divina. Sol enim (ut aiunt Phyſici) mens mundi, noſtras mentes ex ſeſe velut ſcintillas diffunditans, cum eas incenderit vehementius, futuri conſcias reddit. Unde Sibyllæ crebro ſe dicunt ardere, torrente vi magna flammarum. Ammianus Marcellinus, l. 1. c. 1. p. 204, 205. ed. Gronov.

* Cumque magna vis videretur eſſe—in monſtris procurandis in haruſpicum diſciplina, Cicero de div. l. 1. c. 2. See Liv. l. 22. c. 44, cited below, ch. 3. ſect. 4. article 1.

† Le Clerc de L'Incredulité, ch. 1. p. 32. and Mr. Bayle ſur une comete.

‡ See the beginning of the preceding ſection. Lord Bolingbroke repreſents inſpiration, according to the Pagan idea of it, merely as a *natural* phenomenon, and as grounded on a *phyſical* principle, the intoxicating wind or vapour explained above:

bodies; aſcribing to the latter not only life and intelligence, but a *fore-perceiving motion**, and a ſovereign influence on every thing here below. This notion lay at the foundation of divination by art. With regard to natural divination, as by fury, for inſtance, excited by certain exhalations; this was founded on a ſuppoſition of the divinity of the earth, out of which thoſe exhalations are generated, and of the ſun, (called the mind of the world) to which they owe their virtue †. The human ſoul itſelf (which was thought to be "a particle of the divine air or ſpirit, to be taken out from God ‡," and to have exiſted from eternity,) was believed to have a preſaging faculty, which exerted itſelf under ſeveral favourable circumſtances.

above: whereas from the paſſage in Cicero's firſt book of Divination, c. 19, cited above, p. 176. note p. it appears, that that very vapour was conſidered as a *divine* afflatus. See his philoſophical works, V. 1. Eſſay 1. It muſt be acknowleged, however, that Lord Bolingbroke was in this inſtance miſled by men more learned than himſelf, who have conſidered that as *natural* magic, (according to the modern acceptation of it) in which *demons* were not thought to be concerned; without reflecting, that what we now call *inanimate nature*, was regarded by the ancient Heathens as *animated* and *divine*.

* Perennium corporum præſentiendi (*al.* præſentienti) motu, &c. Ammianus Marcellinus, cited above, p. 177.

† Plutarch de defectu orac. p. 436, E. See alſo above, p. 176. note †, and note * below, p. 181.

‡ Ex ipſo Deo decerptus, ex univerſa mente delibatus. Cicero's Tuſc. Quæſt. v. & de Senectut.

ſtances *. As from the imagined exiſtence of theſe gods, they concluded there muſt be divination; ſo from the apprehended reality of divination, they confirmed themſelves in the belief of the exiſtence of the gods †. Hence Maimonides reproaches every magician as an idolater ‡; and Pliny aſcribes all the ſplendor of magic to religion ||. The Heathens had other gods, beſides the objects of nature, viz. demons, or deified human ſpirits; and from their ſubordinate miniſtry and mediation, and that of wicked ſpirits; divination, prophecy, and magic, were thought to proceed §. The aſſiſtance or influence of the gods was obtained by a great variety of rites and ſacrifices, adapted to their reſpective natures ¶; by the uſe of charms and ſuperſtitious words **, by ceremonies and ſupplications.

* Cicero de Divinat. l. 1. c. 5, 31, 49, 51, 59.

† Si divinatio ſit, dii ſint; & ſi dii ſint, ſit divinatio. Cicero de Nat. Deor.

‡ Mor. Nevoch. p. 445. Omnis magus citra dubium eſt Idololatra.

|| Nat. Hiſt. l. 30. c. 12.

§ Herodot. l. 2. c. 83. Plato in ſympoſ. in Epinomide, in Phædro; Porphyr. apud Euſeb. præp. Ev. l. 4, 5, 6, & de Abſtinentia, l. 2. Jamblich. de Myſt. Apul. Apol. Id. de deo Socrat. Plutarch de defect. Orac. cited above p. 176. n. †. & Pythagoras apud Diogen. Laert. in vita Pythag. n. 32. p. 514.

¶ Ritu diverſo placatæ. Ammianus Marcellinus, l. 21. init.

** The famous *Epheſian Letters*, which were certain barbarous words uſed as charms, may be ſeen in Heſychius, or in Dr. Sykes'

ſupplications. Sometimes we find the power of inchanting aſcribed to noxious herbs and drugs *, but not excluſively of the aſſiſtance of the gods, who were invoked to give them efficacy †. The magicians pretended in the proper uſe of their art, (for it was taught as ſuch) to a power of *compelling* ‡ the gods to execute their deſires and commands.

Upon the principles here explained, all the pretences amongſt the Pagans to divination and ſorcery (and every other || ſpecies of magic) were founded; whe-

 ther

Syke's Inquiry, p. 61. See his Further Inquiry, p. 66. Ovid ſays,

Carmina ſanguinea deducunt cornua lunæ
Et revocant niveos ſolis euntis equos.

* Thus the witch in Virgil, Ecl. 8. ſays,

Has herbas, atque hæc Ponto mihi lecta venena
Ipſe dedit Mœris; naſcuntur plurima Ponto.
His ego ſæpe lupum fieri, & ſe condere ſylvis
Mœrin, ſæpe animas imis excire ſepulchris,
Atque ſatas alio vidi traducere meſſes.

† Theocritus Id. 2. They likewiſe thought, Quamvis plantam ſuam habere ſtellam, quemadmodum & omnibus animalibus & metallis certa ſydera adſcribunt. Maimon. Mor. Nevoc. l. 3. c. 37.

‡ They acted cæca coactorum numinum violentia. Enchantreſſes boaſted that they had power over the gods. Lucan. l. 6. v. 606, 742. Ovid. Metamor. l. 7. 192.

|| I have taken no notice of that ſpecies of magic, called *theurgy* (θεουργία,) becauſe it principally conſiſted in a fanatical pretence to communion with demons, and a viſion of their eſſence. So far as it was thought, to inveſt thoſe who practiſed it,

ther thoſe pretences were carried on by the prieſt, under the protection, and for the ſervice of the ſtate *; or for the purpoſes of private gain, by the loweſt orders of magicians †, conjurers and witches, generally (though ſeldom effectually) proſcribed or prohibited by law ‡. Whatever difference there might be between them, the Scripture brands them all as ſhameleſs impoſtors; and reproaches them with an utter inability of diſcovering or accompliſhing any thing ſupernatural. The prophet Iſaiah having foretold the deſtruction of Babylon, ſo famous all over the

it, with the power of the gods; it differed in one reſpect from that ſort of magic called ſorcery (γοητεία;) *theurgy* invoking only the *benevolent* divinities; *ſorcery* the *miſchievous ones*, whoſe operations were ſuitable to their nature.

* That the public miniſters of religion practiſed ſorcery as well as divination, is certain from their curſing the enemies of the ſtate, and devoting them to deſtruction.

† They were rather more extravagant, as well as more miſchievous, than the eſtabliſhed prieſts; inaſmuch as they pretended to know other people's fortunes, to diſcover what was loſt, to bewitch, to procure love, to walk upon the water, to fly through the air, to raiſe or lay ſtorms, to turn themſelves or others into any ſhapes, to remove corn from one field into another, to draw down the moon, to raiſe ghoſts, to ſtop the courſe of rivers, and to kill or cure both men and cattle, &c. See Ovid's Metamor. l. 7. v. 199.

‡ Concerniug conjurers and fortune-tellers, who were called *mathematici*, Tacitus ſays, they are a *fallacious* ſort of men, quod in civitate noſtra & vetabitur ſemper, & retinebitur. Hiſt. l. 1. c. 22.

the world for divination and aſtrology; thus proceeds to inſult that proud city *: "Stand now with "thine inchantments, and with the multitude of thy "ſorceries, wherein thou haſt laboured from thy "youth; if ſo be thou ſhalt be able to profit, if ſo "be thou mayeſt prevail. Thou art wearied in the "multitude of thy councils: let now the aſtrologers, "the ſtar-gazers, the monthly prognoſticators, ſtand "up, and ſave thee from thoſe things which ſhall "come upon thee," from that deſtruction, which, he tells them, with their various methods of divination and ſorcery, they would be unable either to foreſee or prevent. The ſame prophet thus warns the Iſraelites againſt having recourſe to the Heathen diviners for inſtruction; "Should not a people ſeek unto their god?" Whom then ſhould you conſult but the God of Iſrael? "For the living to the dead†?" that is, Is it not abſurd to conſult the dead concerning the ſtate of the living, of which the former are ignorant? Or the meaning may be, Inſtead of the living God, will you have recourſe to the dead? The Heathen gods were dead men: and the oracles were placed in their temples, which were their ſepulchres. Moreover, the Heathen diviners pretended to call up the ſouls of the departed, which were ſuppoſed to poſſeſs a prophetic virtue; nay, by an inſpection of the entrails of boys who had ſuffered a violent death,

* Iſaiah xlvii. 11—13.

† Iſaiah viii. 18, 19.

they hoped to dive into futurity*. The language of Iſaiah implies, that it was unpardonable ſtupidity, in any or all theſe ways, to expect any inſtruction or information from the dead. When Jeremiah thus warns the Jews, "Learn not the way of the Hea-"then, and be not afraid of the ſigns of heaven," whoſe appearances were thought to portend particular calamities; he pronounces "the cuſtoms of the Heathens vain," on account of the utter ignorance and impotence of their gods†, who could not be ſuppoſed to convey to others, that knowledge and power which they did not poſſeſs themſelves. And thus Jeremiah deſcribes the prophets who were not ſent of God, "They propheſy unto you a falſe viſion "and divination, and a thing of nought, and the "deceit of their heart‡." On other occaſions, he addreſſes the people of God in the following ſtrain: "Hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your di-"viners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchan-"ters, nor to your ſorcerers. For they propheſy a "lie unto you‖." The ſacred writers do at all times brand thoſe, who exerciſed the arts of divination and ſorcery, *as liars*§; and the arts themſelves *as lying vanities*,

* To theſe methods of divination Juſtin Martyr refers, Apol. 1. p. 27. ed. Thirlb. Νεκυομαντεῖαι μὲν γὰρ, καὶ αἱ διαφθόρων παίδων ἐποπτεύσεις, καὶ ψυχῶν ἀνθρωπίνων κλήσεις.

† Jerem. x. 2, 3—8, 14. Compare Iſ. xli. 23, 24.

‡ Jer. xiv. 14.

‖ Ch. xxvii. 9, 10.

§ Iſaiah xliv. 25. Jerem. l. 36.

vanities *, the moſt abſurd and groundleſs deluſions imaginable. What ſtronger language could they have uſed, ſuppoſing them to have believed (as they certainly did believe) all the magic of the ancients to have had no other ſupport, than human artifice and falſehood?

Notwithſtanding this clear deciſion of the point by the divine oracles, many Chriſtians have contended for the ſupernatural power and efficacy of Pagan divination and ſorcery. This point was maintained by the Fathers in particular, who aſcribed the efficacy of magic to evil demons; as ſome of the Heathen philoſophers alſo did†. It was a very prevailing opinion in the primitive church ‡, that magicians and necromancers, both amongſt the Gentiles and heretical Chriſtians, had each their particular demons, perpetually attending on their perſons, and obſequious to their commands, by whoſe help they could call up the ſouls of the dead, foretel future events, and perform miracles. "In the caſe of idolatry, "they imagined demons to aſſume the names, and "to

* Pſalm xxxi. 6. Jonah ii. 8.

† Euſebius's Præp. Ev. l. 5. c. 4, has this inſcription, Περὶ τῶν πονηρῶν δαιμόνων εἶναι, τὰ παρὰ τοῖς ἔθνεσι μαντεῖα τε καὶ χρησήρια. And St. Auſtin (de civ. Dei, l. 8. c. 16.) ſays, Inter cætera etiam dicit [Apuleius] ad eos [dæmones] pertinere divinationes augurum, aruſpicum, vatum, atque ſomniorum. Vid. Minuc. Fel. p. 30. ed. Lugd. Bat. and ſee above, p. 180. note §. Porphyry de Abſtin. l. 2. § 41. p. 85, ſays, διὰ μέντοι τῶν ἐναγῶν καὶ ἡ πᾶσα γοητεία ἐκτελεῖται.

‡ See Dr. Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 66.

" to act the parts of the Heathen gods; and in ma-
" gic to assume the forms of departed souls, and to
" appear under the names of those, who were called
" up from the dead; and as such, to answer all ques-
" tions, which should be demanded of them *." As what was urged above † against the former supposition, concludes with equal force against the latter; I need not shew, how inconsistent this is with the Scripture account of the magicians, as utterly unable to support their pretensions, by any works or predictions beyond human power and skill. It will be necessary however to examine what is alledged, in support of the contrary doctrine.

1. It is alleged, " that the *names* by which the
" several sorts of diviners are described in Scripture,
" imply a communication with spiritual beings."
Those who urge this argument, do not always distinguish between the Scriptures in their original languages, and in the translation now in use, which (like most other translations, whether ancient or modern) was made by persons deeply tinctured with the vulgar superstition, and often on that account does great injustice to the original. That phrase ‡, *a familiar*

* Id. p. 70. † Page 240.

‡ This phrase (which occurs Lev. xix. 31. chap. xx. 6, 7. Deut. xviii. 11. 1 Sam. xxviii. 3, 7, 8, 9. 2 Kings xxi. 6. ch. xxiii. 24. 1 Chron. x. 13. 2 Chr. xxxiii. 6. Is. xxix. 4. ch. viii. 19.) has nothing in the original to answer to it but *ob* (or *oboth* in the plural number) which signifies *a bottle*, (which amongst the ancients somewhat resembled our bladders,) Job xxxix. 19; and hence came to denote a person whose belly is distended

familiar ſpirit, or *familiar ſpirits*, which occurs ſo often, is thought to be an inſtance of this kind. But even ſuppoſing the original word to be rightly tranſlated; it cannot be inferred from hence, that the ſacred writers believed, that any perſons were really aſſiſted and inſpired by a familiar ſpirit. They could not allow, and meant only to characterize, their pretenſions. The Scripture, as it deſcribes the Heathen deities by their uſual appellations, (gods, lords, demons,)

diſtended as a bottle, and is applied particularly to thoſe perſons who delivered oracles as from their bellies, ſwelled, as it was believed, by ſome divine afflatus. Accordingly, it is generally tranſlated by the LXX. ἐγγαστρίμυθος; a word which ſignifies thoſe who ſpeak with their mouths ſhut, ſo as to ſeem to ſpeak out of their bellies. But though the word, according to its ſtricteſt etymology, might denote only *a bottle-bellied perſon;* yet as it is the word uſed to deſcribe thoſe, who pretended that their bellies were inflated by a divine energy, by the perſons who believed the reality of thoſe prentences; our tranſlators are not, perhaps, wholly to be condemned, for the manner in which they render it. (See below, ch. 4. ſect. 2.)

But it is not ſo eaſy to excuſe them, for the manner in which they have acquitted themſelves on another occaſion. I refer to their repreſenting Simon, the magician, as *bewitching* the Samaritans; and hereby giving a ſenſe to the word, ἐξιστῶν, Acts viii. 9, different from what they themſelves have put upon ἐξίστατο, in the 13th verſe: which they juſtly render, *he wondered.* Simon had been exerciſing the magical arts in Samaria, and thereby *raiſing the aſtoniſhment* of the inhabitants. But the ſight of genuine miracles diſcovered at once the vanity of the moſt artful imitations of them, and *aſtoniſhed* and convinced Simon himſelf, who had ſo long *raiſed the aſtoniſhment* of others. Vid. Schmidium ad Act. viii. 13.

mons,) which are expreſſive, not of what they really were in themſelves, but of what their votaries believed them to be * ; ſo it calls all thoſe perſons, who pretended to any intercourſe with the gods, by their common names, (prophets, magicians, necromancers, diviners, ſorcerers, monthly prognoſticators, &c.) though theſe names were at firſt aſſumed by the pretenders themſelves, to enable them more ſucceſsfully to carry on their impoſtures ; or conferred on them by the ſuperſtition of the people. Whatever pretenſions or claims theſe names may imply, it is ſufficient that the Scriptures deny them any anſwerable powers or performances. And therefore when St. Luke ſpeaks of the damſel at Philippi as " poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of divination, or of Apollo †," he meant only to deſcribe her pretenſions, and the common belief concerning her. Dr. Sykes was of opinion, that this woman had merely acquired a trick of ſpeaking inwardly, as from her belly ; by the diſcovery of which ſhe was diſabled from playing it any longer : while others

* See above, p. 172. In like manner Jeremiah calls particular celeſtial appearances, " the ſigns of heaven," becauſe the Heathens regarded them as ſuch, ch. x. 2. And who ſcruples to ſay, ſuch a perſon tells fortunes, when nothing more is meant, than that he pretends to do it ?

† Acts xvi. 16, 18. *Πνεῦμα πύθωνος, a ſpirit of Python* or *Apollo* : this is manifeſtly the language of the Pagans, which St. Luke adopted, becauſe it ſerved to deſcribe the caſe of the damſel. He cannot be ſuppoſed to allow, that Apollo (whether the word here denotes a hero god, or the ſun) imparted to her the power of propheſying.

others plead that ſhe was really inſpired. Both parties equally forget, that *a ſpirit of Python* or *Apollo*, denoted in the language of antiquity, not only the inſpiration of Apollo, but alſo that raving and madneſs, which were the effect of that ſuppoſed inſpiration and poſſeſſion *. And therefore the miracle performed upon the damſel, or the caſting out of her the ſpirit of Apollo, conſiſted in curing her madneſs, and reſtoring her to her right mind; in conſequence of which the people would conſider her no longer as inſpired or poſſeſſed.

2. The *laws of Moſes* † againſt divination and witchcraft are thought to prove the *efficacy* of theſe arts; though thoſe laws do really prove nothing more than their execrable *wickedneſs* and *impiety*. By the credit of theſe arts, the people were drawn away from the true God to falſe ones. The arts themſelves were founded upon the principles of idolatry ‡; and the

* No propheteſs was thought to be inſpired, but when ſhe was mad and raving. Ἤ τις γὰρ δὴ ἐν Δελφοῖς προφῆτις, αἵ τ' ἐν Δωδώνῃ ἱέρειαι, μανεῖσαι, κ. τ. λ. Platon. Phædr. p. 1220, C. D. E. ἐδὲις γὰρ ἔννους ἐφαπτέται μαντικῆς ἐνθέως τε ἀληθοῦς. Id. Tim. p. 1074. D. It appears from Meric Caſaubon, (cited by Dr. Macknight, Harmony, v. 1. p. 179, 2d ed.) that to the natural diſeaſes of melancholy, madneſs, epilepſy, &c. enthuſiaſtic divinatory fits are (thought to be) incidental: and that when the diſeaſe is cured, the enthuſiaſms go away.

† Exod. xxii. 18. Lev. xix. 26, 31. ch. xx. 27. Deut. xviii. 10, 11. Would it not be in vain to make laws againſt thoſe, whoſe miraculous power could prevent their execution?

‡ This was proved above concerning divination, p. 178. Witchcraft alſo, and all magical rites, had a reference to the heavenly

the rites and placatory ſacrifices which attended them, were in their very nature acts of idolatry, that is, of high treaſon againſt the Jewiſh ſtate, over which Jehovah preſided as ſupreme Governor. It was neceſſary therefore that every magician ſhould be put to death, becauſe every magician was an idolater. I add, that many of the rites of magic were flagrant immoralities. For thoſe who anciently practiſed witchcraft, mingled dangerous drugs with their compoſitions, and, on account of the real miſchief they hereby did, are often ranked with *poiſoners* *. Amongſt other deteſtable methods of divination, one was the murther of infants and others, who were ſacrificed on purpoſe, that by raking into their entrails, they might gain an inſight into futurity; as appears from the teſtimony of Herodotus, Cicero, Lucan, Juvenal, Tacitus, Philoſtratus, Porphyry†, and many other learned

heavenly bodies. Nullum autem magicum opus ſine ſiderum reſpectu & conſideratione poteſt perfici. Maimon. Mor. Nevoc. pt. 3. c. 37. He farther obſerves, that the belief of their power to hurt or help, neceſſarily led mankind to worſhip them. Accordingly both witchcraft and divination are joined with idolatry, 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23. Iſ. ii. 6—8. ch. xlvii. 12, 13. Jerem. xxvii. 9, 10. Ezek. xxi. 21, 22. Nahum iii. 4. Micah v. 12.

* The Hebrew word, mecaſhephim, which we tranſlate *ſorcerers*, the LXX render by φαρμακὸς.

† Jacobus Geuſius, in his book entitled, Victimæ humanæ, Pars I. c. 19—21, cites theſe and other Heathen writers, to ſhew how very frequently human ſacrifices were employed by thoſe, who practiſed divination and magic. The *Cimbri* ripped open

ed Pagans; as well as from the intimations of the ſacred writers*. Sorcerers and ſorcereſſes were ſuppoſed to perform all their amazing works by the aſſiſtance of the ſouls of young boys, who had been violently put to death for that purpoſe, and then called up from the dead, by ineffable adjurations†. Now might it not be very fit, ſeverely to puniſh theſe *external acts of ſorcery*‡, without entering into the queſtion

open the bowels, and from them formed a judgment of future events. Strabo, l. 7. p. 451. (compare Porphyry de Abſt. l. 2. § 51.) The *Celtæ* divined by the agonies and convulſions of the men, who were offered for a ſacrifice, and from the effuſion of their blood, Diodor. Sic. l. 5. p. 308.

* Deut. xviii. 10, 11. 2 Kings xvii. 17. chap. xxi. 6. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. Ezek. xx. 26, 31.

† In Horace's epodes, l. 5. epod. 5. v. 12, 13, the perſon murdered by the ſorcereſs, Canidia, is puer, impube corpus. The author of that very ancient, though ſpurious work, the "Recognitions of St. Clemens," repreſents Simon Magus as ſaying, Pueri incorrupti, & violenter necati, animam adjuramentis ineffabilibus evocatam adſiſtere mihi feci; & per ipſam ſit omne quod jubeo. Ed. Cotelerii, p. 523. See Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. l. 7. c. 10. Chryſoſtom and others, cited by Cotelerius in his note on this paſſage of Clemens. This kind of divination was called *βεϱεφοϱμαντεία*. On ſuch rites of magic, ſee Broukhuſius on Tibullus, l. 11. 45. and Fabricius, Bibl. Antiq. p. 417, 419.

‡ This is not a groundleſs diſtinction; for the laws of Moſes are levelled wholly againſt the *external acts* of ſorcery, as appears from all the laws referred to above, p. 189. note †, and particularly from Deut. xviii. 10, 11, 14, "There ſhall not be "found amongſt you any one that maketh his ſon or his daugh-

"ter

queſtion, whether they were or were not of any *efficacy* to procure ſupernatural aſſiſtance?

3. Pretenſions to divination (it is farther pleaded) could not have ſupported "their credit in all the "Heathen nations, and through all ages;" if ſome inſtances of true divination had not happened, however rare we may ſuppoſe them to have been. This laſt argument (which was conſidered in a former chapter *) proceeds on a ſuppoſition notoriouſly falſe: for diviners of all ſorts, obſervers of times, inchanters, witches, wizzards, ventriloquiſts, and necromancers, did not ſupport their credit in the manner here alledged,

"ter to paſs through the fire, or that uſeth divination, or an "obſerver of the times, or an enchanter, or a witch, &c." Amongſt thoſe who believed the ſupernatural power of ſorcery, laws were framed againſt its ſuppoſed *effects*. The Roman law forbad bewitching the fruits of the earth, and drawing their neighbours corn in their own fields by charms. Apud nos in duodecim tabulis cavetur, ne quis alienos fructus excantaſſit. Seneca, Nat. Quæſt. l. 4. c. 7. Seneca adds, "our "ignorant anceſtors imagined, that ſhowers could be procur-"ed or driven away by charms; but we need not go to any "ſchool of philoſophy to teach us otherwiſe." As the Romans became more enlightened, the ſtyle of their law was altered. The Lex Cornelia, uſually cited as a law againſt ſorcery, forbids *poiſoning*, & mala ſacrificia, Liv. Decad. 1. l. 8. which may ſerve both to explain and vindicate the laws of Moſes for the puniſhments denounced againſt the ſame crimes, and to ſhew how unreaſonably this divine legiſlator has been reproached, on account of theſe laws, with a ſpirit of perſecution.

* Chap. 2. ſect. 2.

alleged, and never were in any reputation with Pagans of a liberal mind and education. And from Chriſtians, whoſe zeal for the credit of ancient magic thus tranſports them beyond the bounds of truth, we appeal to Heathens of underſtanding and virtue, in vindication of the cenſure paſſed upon every ſpecies of magic by the prophets of God. Cicero, the greateſt maſter of reaſon and learning amongſt the Romans, and in all reſpects a very able judge of this ſubject, condemns the oracles of the Heathen gods as either *falſe*, or *obſcure*, or *ambiguous*, (ſo as to require other oracles to explain them) or as true only by *chance* or *accident* *. We find both Sophocles and Euripides, upon the public theatre at Athens, (a city greatly addicted to ſuperſtition and idolatry,) paſſing a ſimilar cenſure upon the Pagan ſoothſayers and diviners †, or repreſenting them as men actuated only by the love

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* Partim falſis, ut ego opinor; partim caſu veris, ut fit in omni oratione ſæpiſſime; partim flexiloquis & obſcuris, ut interpres egeat interprete, et ſors ipſa ad ſortes referenda ſit; partim ambiguis. De Divinat. l. 2. c. 56. In the 25th chapter, he argues againſt divination by *art*, in the whole extent of it, from the *obſcurity* of the ſigns. It appears likewiſe from Cicero in the ſame book, (as alſo from Strabo, l. 15.) that aſtrology was rejected by aſtronomers, and the beſt philoſophers.

† —— Τίς ᾧ μάντις ἐς' ἀνὴρ;
Ὅς ὀλίγ' ἀληθῆ, πολλὰ ᾧ ψεύδη λέγει
Τυχάν· ὅταν ᾧ μὴ τύχῃ, διοίχεται.
In Aulide, v. 956.

of money *. Pindar in his Olympic odes †, which were all compoſed to be ſung on the moſt public occaſions, and probably at the ſolemn ſacrifices offered to the gods, affirms, "that they have beſtowed upon "mortals no ſure preſage of things to come." And in ſtill earlier times, Heſiod ‡ had maintained the ſame opinion. What various rites of ſuperſtition were practiſed by ſuch Heathens as were loſt to all reflection, whereby they gueſſed what ſhould happen to them; we learn from Theophraſtus in his characters of ſuperſtition, and from Plutarch in his book on the ſame ſubject ‖: but we find them derided by Terence in his Phormio §. Nor were there any men of underſtanding, who gave countenance to any of the modes of divination, unleſs from a principle of compliance with vulgar prejudices, or for reaſons of ſtate ¶. Amongſt the Heathens no impoſture was cenſured as unlawful,

* Τὸ μαντικὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος. Sophocles Antigone, 1607. Vide etiam Oed. Tyr. 395. et Euripid. Iphig. in Aul. 520.

† Ode xii. l. 10.

‡ Μάντις δ' ἐδέις ἐσιν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
Ὁσις ἂν ἀθέσῃ Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο.
Heſiod. Fragment.

‖ See alſo Maimonides de Idolatria, c. 11. § 4, 5, 6.

§ Act. 4. ſc. 4.

¶ Exiſtimo jus augurum, etſi divinationis opinione principio conſtitutum ſit, tamen poſtea reipublicæ cauſa conſervatum ac retentum. Cicero de Divinat. l. 2. c. 35. ſee alſo c. 33.

From

unlawful, which was judged to be uſeful *. With regard to ſorcery; the pretended effects of it, as they are deſcribed by the Heathen poets †, are too extravagant to be confuted, and their beſt writers treat the art itſelf with deriſion. In proof of this, I appeal to Horace ‡, Cicero ||, Seneca §, Dion Caſſius ¶, Quintus Curtius **, Tacitus ††, and Pliny ‡‡, beſides others already taken notice of; and indeed to all the Heathens, whoſe underſtandings were not totally depraved by ſuperſtition. The miracles ſaid to be wrought amongſt the Pagans, were not believed by the hiſto-

From the ſame political motives, the wiſeſt Heathens countenanced the popular idolatry. See Auguſt. de Civitat. Dei, l. 4. c. 3, 22, 27, 31.

* Plutarch. l. de Socrat. Genio, p. 579, 580.

† Ovid. Met. l. 7. fab. 2. l. 199, &c. Virgil. Eclog. 8. Æn. 4. Lucan. l. de bello civili, 6. Manil. l. 1. Tibullus, l. 1. Eleg. 2. See above, p. 182. note †.

‡ Epiſt. l. 2. ep. 2. l. 208.

|| De Nat. Deor. l. 1. Cum poetarum autem errore conjungere licet portenta magorum, Ægyptiorumque in eodem genere dementiam. And in his ſecond book of divination, where he delivers his own ſentiments, he ſays in reference to magical operations, Num igitur me cogis etiam fabulis credere? &c.

§ Nat. Quæſt. l. 4. c. 67.

¶ L. 52. p. 490.

** L. 7. c. 4.

†† L. 1. c. 22.

‡‡ Nat. Hiſt. l. 30. c. 1, 2, 3. l. 26. c. 4.

rians * who relate them; and the philoſophers treated them as fables †. If magic was able to ſupport ſome reputation in ages of groſs ignorance, through the ſuperior knowlege and fraudulent contrivances of thoſe who exerciſed it; yet when learning revived and became general, it never failed to ſink into contempt. It did ſo in the ſame age, in which the Goſpel gained a general eſtabliſhment by the credit of undeniable miracles. In vain did the Roman emporor, Nero, by diſcovering the moſt extravagant fondneſs for magic, and ſending for the moſt eminent profeſſors of it from every quarter of the world, endeavour to ſupport its ſinking reputation. Pliny informs us, that all that Nero gained by his attempts, was an entire conviction of the folly of magic. And he obſerves himſelf, that if at any time magicians perform extraordinary things, it is owing to the efficacy of their drugs, not of their magic art ‡. Now, inaſmuch as

* Quæ ante conditam, condendamve urbem, poeticis magis decora fabulis, quam incorruptis rerum geſtarum monumentis traduntur, ea nec affirmare nec refellere in animo eſt. Datur hæc venia antiquitati, ut miſcendi humana divinis, primordia urbium auguſtiora faciat. Liv. Proem. After reciting ſeveral prodigies, Livy adds, Et alia ludibria oculorum, auriumque, credita pro veris. L. 22. c. 44. See Liv. l. 24. c. 10. l. 22. c. 3. et Quintus Curtius, l. 9. c. 1.

† In reference to Heathen miracles, Cicero ſays, l. 2. de Divinat. Nihil debet eſſe in philoſophia commentitiis fabellis loci. Concerning Cato, he tells us in the ſame book, Mirari ſe aiebet, quod non rideret aruſpex, aruſpicem cum vidiſſet.

‡ In his Veneficas artes pollere, non magicas, Nat. Hiſt. l. 30. c. 2.

as magic did conſtantly loſe its credit, juſt in the degree in which men exerciſed their underſtandings, it certainly was not ſupported by any ſupernatural power.

SECT. IV.

Concerning the falſe prophets as ſpoken of in Scripture, in which the following paſſages are explained, Deut. xiii. 1—5. Matt. xxiv. 24. 2 Theſſ. ii. 9. Rev. xiii. 13, 14; *together with ſeveral others relative to the falſe teachers in the apoſtolic age.*

THAT the pretences to inſpiration and miracles, made by falſe prophets, in ſupport of error and idolatry, ſhould be branded in Scripture as the ſole effects of human craft and impoſture; is what might be naturally expected from thoſe writings, which do not allow the power of inſpiring predictions, or of working miracles, to any Pagan deity, or to any evil ſpirit. For from what other quarter was it ever imagined, that a falſe prophet could receive any ſupernatural ſupport? It will be neceſſary, however, to examine the ſeveral paſſages of Scripture, which ſpeak to this point; inaſmuch as they have had a ſenſe aſſigned them, abſolutely inconſiſtent with the principles already eſtabliſhed.

I.

I ſhall begin with conſidering that celebrated warning of Moſes to the Iſraelites: "If there ariſe among

" you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth
" thee a ſign or a wonder, and the ſign or the won-
" der come to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſay-
" ing, Let us go after other gods, (which thou haſt
" not known,) and let us ſerve them; thou ſhalt not
" hearken unto his words:—for the Lord your God
" proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord
" your God with all your heart.—And that prophet,
" and that dreamer of dreams, ſhall be put to death,
" becauſe he hath ſpoken to turn you away from the
" Lord your God, which brought thee out of the
" land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the houſe
" of bondage *."

It has been contended that Moſes, in this paſſage, is laying down this general rule, viz. " that the true " *divinity* of miracles is to be determined by the *doc-* " *trines*, which they are applied to confirm." It is farther aſſerted, that the Jews are here required, to make *his law*, in particular, the ſtandard by which to judge of miracles; to diſallow the force and evidence of thoſe which oppoſe that law, and even to put to death the prophet who performed them, becauſe he taught the worſhip of a ſtrange god †. The learned Dr. Benſon ‡ and Dr. Lardner ||, as well as many

* Deut. xiii. 1—5.

† Hence Rouſſeau concluded, that the Pagans had an equal right to put the apoſtles to death, for preaching up to them the worſhip of a ſtrange god, though they proved their miſſion by miracles.

‡ Life of Chriſt, p. 202.

|| Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtimonies, V. 1. p. 255, 256.

Though

many others, were of opinion, that Moſes here puts a caſe, which never would happen; but if it did happen, and a miracle was performed to induce the Iſraelites to worſhip other gods, it was to be diſregarded. Here it is natural to enquire, whether any prophet did ever ariſe amongſt the Iſraelites, who performed real miracles to draw them into idolatry. If no ſuch prophet did ariſe, (and there is not the leaſt reaſon to believe there did;) how needleſs was it to caution the Iſraelites againſt him? Nay, Moſes knew that it was impoſſible any ſuch prophet ſhould ariſe; becauſe he appropriates all miracles to God *, and denies that the Heathen deities could ſupport their claims by any ſupernatural works. He always repreſents them as ſenſeleſs idols, and could not therefore allow them any power or dominion over mankind. On all occaſions he appeals to miracles, as abſolute proofs of the divinity of Jehovah, and of his own miſſion *: and can he, without groſs ſelf-contradiction, here repreſent theſe works as common both to the true God and to rival deities; to a divine meſſenger and a falſe prophet? And indeed why

Though this judicious, candid and excellent writer aſſerts, that Moſes here refers to miracles; yet, contrary to his uſual method, he produces no proof of his aſſertion. Nay, he allows it to be a rule of Scripture, that if any man propoſes, and performs a miracle in proof of his miſſion, it would be deciſive in his favour: and yet in the caſe ſtated above, he ſuppoſes that a miracle determines nothing.

* This will be ſhewn below, ch. 3. ſect. 5. and ch. 4, ſect. 1.

ſhould not a real miracle equally gain credit to both or neither? be of as great weight *againſt* Moſes as *for* him? Moſes neither does, nor could allow, that an idolatrous prophet would perform works truly miraculous: and the very order to put ſuch a prophet to death, ſhews that there was no danger of his being protected from puniſhment by a miraculous power.

The Jewiſh lawgiver here refers, not to true miracles, but to thoſe *divinations* amongſt the Pagans, by which the credit of idolatry was ſupported. Amongſt other methods of divination, one was by the interpretation of *portents*, *oſtents*, *prodigies*, *monſters* *, rare and extraordinary appearances and occurrences, which were falſely deemed ſupernatural, and thought to preſignify † future events. Theſe are *the ſigns and wonders* ‡ here ſpoken of by Moſes, and which it was the

* The ſeveral ſpecies of divination are enumerated in Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. 2. c. 65. Multa cernunt haruſpices; multa augures provident; multa oraculis declarantur; multa vaticinationibus; multa ſomniis; multa portentis.

† See the paſſage from Herodotus, cited above, p. 175, and note ‡, below.

‡ Heb. *Oth*, a *ſign*, and *mopheth*, a *wonder*, like the correſpondent Greek words σημεῖον and τέρας, though often applied to miraculous works, yet very commonly bear a different application. *Oth* denotes any *mark* or *token*, Gen. xvii. 11. Exod. xii. 13. Ezek. xx. 12, 20; and ſo likewiſe does the word σημεῖον, Matt. xxvi. 48. Luke ii. 12. Rom. iv. 11. 2 Theſſ. iii. 17. Nor can *mopheth* denote a miracle, Pſ. lxxi. 7. If. xx. 3. Ezek. xii. 6. ch. xxiv. 24; or τέρας in the ſame paſſages of the LXX. *Oth* and *mopheth* are both applied to ſuch

the buſineſs of the Pagan prophet (or interpreter of the will of the gods) and diviner by dreams to expound *. And that Moſes does not here refer to any miraculous works performed *upon the ſpot*, but to a prodigy or ſign of ſome future event, is farther evident

ſuch things as point out, and preſignify future events, 1 Kings xiii. 3. Iſ. viii. 18. ch. xx. 3. Ezek. xii. 6, 11. ch. xxiv. 24, 27; and ſo are both σημεῖον and τέρας, Luke xxi. 11, 25. Acts ii. 19. In Ælian's Var. Hiſt. l. 12. c. 57. we are told, that when Alexander led his forces againſt Thebes, οἱ μὲν θεοὶ σημεῖα αὐτοῖς καὶ τέρατα ἀπέστελλον, προσημαίνοντες τὰς περὶ αὐτῶν ὅσον οὔπω τύχας, "the gods ſent *ſigns* und *wonders* amongſt them, "preſignifying their impending fate." Polybius alſo (lib. 3. c. 10. p. 365. l. 9. cited by Raphelius on Mat. xxiv. 24.) uſes both theſe words together in the ſame ſenſe as Ælian. See alſo the citation from Herodotus, ſect. 3. p. 175. note †, where τέρας ſignifies a prodigy. The following paſſage from Livy, (l. 22. c. 44.) may ſerve farther to explain the nature and uſe of prodigies. Conſules duabus urbanis legionibus ſcriptis, ſupplementoque in alias lecto, priuſquam ab urbe moverent, prodigia procurarunt, quæ nuntiata erant. Murus ac portæ tactæ, & Ariciæ etiam Jovis ædes de cælo tacta fuerat. Et alia ludibria oculorum, auriumque, credita prò veris. The prophetic ſign and portent was ſometimes preternatural, Homer. Il. 2. l. 308—324, but often nothing more than ſome very rare and uncommon accidents and occurrences, Terent. Phormio Act. 4. ſc. 4. l. 24, 25, 26. Hence the Roman orator ſays, (De Div. l. 2.) Si quod raro fit, id portentum putandum eſt, ſapientem eſſe portentum eſt, ſæpius enim mulum peperiſſe arbitror, quam ſapientem fuiſſe.

* In Homer (Il. 1. v. 62.) *a prophet*, and *an expounder of dreams* are reckoned amongſt the perſons, capable of explaining the meaning of Apollo in ſending the plague amongſt the Greeks. Compare Jerem. xxvii. 9.

dent from his ſpeaking of the ſign given, as a thing that *might come to paſs*, or afterwards happen. To *give* a ſign or a wonder, therefore, muſt mean, the propoſing and appealing to any particular prodigy or portent, as a token or proof of a divine interpoſition, as a declaration of the decrees of the gods, and an indication of futurity. It is indeed ſuppoſed, that the prodigy might poſſibly be followed by the very event it was ſaid to preſage; nevertheleſs Moſes did not, and could not admit, that this completion of the prediction was a proof of any ſupernatural inſpiration. For the Heathen gods, according to his repreſentation of them, were as unable to foretel, as they were to accompliſh, any thing. Predictions no leſs than miracles, are propoſed in Scripture as ſigns of a prophet's miſſion. When a prophet ſpoke in the name of the *true God*, and the event foretold did not come to paſs; the Iſraelites were to conclude, that the prophet ſpoke entirely from himſelf *; it being impoſſible that Jehovah ſhould either be deceived himſelf, or deceive his creatures. On the other hand, if his prediction (of ſuch future events as human reaſon could not foreſee) received its accompliſhment, they were to regard him as a prophet †. But a perſon who ſpoke in the name of a *falſe* or *idol god*, was to be rejected, notwithſtanding the accompliſhment of his (conjectural) prediction; becauſe the deity by whom he profeſſed to be inſpired, was a mere nullity, and

* Deut. xviii. 18—22.

† Jerem. xxviii. 9. If. xli. 23. ch. vii. 14.

and therefore could not inſpire him with any ſupernatural knowlege. The very ſuppoſition, that the Pagan prognoſticator might, in a particular inſtance, divine aright; implies, that this was not likely to be a common caſe, but that this predictive ſign would more generally fail of its accompliſhment; and conſequently was nothing more than human conjecture *.

To diſcern the full meaning and propriety of this prophetic admonition, we muſt recollect both *the temper*, and *the circumſtances* of the Iſraelites. They were continually expoſed to the artifices of the numerous Heathen prieſts and diviners †; who in virtue of their ſuperior ſkill in the laws of nature, were able to make very probable gueſſes concerning ſome events, which were thought to be beyond the reach of human foreſight; and who, no doubt, by habit acquired a conjectural ſagacity more than common; and who, at leaſt, by the very frequency of their conjectures, could ſcarcely be *always* ‡ in the wrong. Whenever their predictions came to paſs, they urged the accompliſhment of their ſign (ſent, as they affirmed, by the gods) as a divine interpoſition. To facts

* Againſt the divinity of ſigns and oſtents, we find the Heathens objecting their obſcurity, Quæ ſi ſigna Deorum putanda ſunt, cur tam obſcura fuerunt? Cicero de Div. l. 2. c. 25. See above, p. 193.

† 1 Kings xviii. 19. Jerem. xxvii. 9, 10.

‡ For as Cicero obſerves, (de Divinat. l. 2. c. 4.) Quis eſt enim qui totum diem jaculans, non aliquando collimet?

facts of this nature we know the Pagans were wont to appeal. But this was not the worſt of the caſe. Thoſe who are ſtrongly addicted to ſuperſtition, eaſily give credit to every thing that ſeems to favour it; they remember and regard a ſingle oracle that proves true, while they overlook the more numerous inſtances in which the oracles have failed. With regard to the Iſraelites, their whole hiſtory ſhews, that they had too little eſteem and reliſh of the chaſte and pure worſhip of the true God, and were inflamed with the love of idolatry, on account of its licentious rites, and the indulgence it allowed to their luſts. This made them an eaſy prey to the deluſion of falſe prophets, and is the ground of the frequent warnings againſt them in Scripture. Moſes here puts the caſe as ſtrongly as poſſible, when he tells them: "Suppoſe that a Pa-
"gan prophet or diviner ſhould propoſe ſome pro-
"digy or extraordinary appearance, as a proof of
"the interpoſition of a falſe god, and an indication
"of futurity; and that the event ſhould correſpond
"to the prophecy; do not on this account haſtily
"conclude, that there is any thing ſupernatural or
"miraculous in the caſe; neither expect that the true
"God ſhould interpoſe * in an extraordinary manner
"at every turn, to prevent ſuch occurrences as theſe;
"which he will permit for the trial and diſcovery of
"your temper. If doubtful appearances and lucky
"conjectures

* For ſuch purpoſes God might on ſome great occaſions interpoſe, "He fruſtrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad." Iſaiah xliv. 25. See Pſalm xxxi. 10.

" conjectures ſerve you as reaſons to deſert his wor-
" ſhip; this will be a full proof of your being previ-
" ouſly diſaffected to him. For ye know, how am-
" ply he demonſtrated his own divinity and ſole do-
" minion over nature †, (ſo utterly ſubverſive of all
" the groundleſs claims of the Heathen gods,) and
" laid you under the moſt powerful and laſting obli-
" gations to his worſhip and ſervice, by thoſe ſtu-
" pendous and undeniable miracles, which accom-
" pliſhed your deliverance from the bondage of
" Egypt."

From this view of the paſſage, it appears, that Moſes does not make the ſuppoſition, of a prophet's working real miracles in the name of the Pagan deities; nor require the Iſraelites to diſregard ſuch works, on account of the abſurdity of the doctrine they are deſigned to atteſt. Nor the moſt diſtant intimation is given, that we are in any caſe to make a prophet's doctrine, the ſtandard whereby to judge of the divinity of his miracles. He is here guarding the Iſraelites againſt the pretended divination and prodigies of the Pagans. And the reaſon he aſſigns, why they ſhould not ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced by prodigies and ſtrange events, or by the accidental completion of a conjectural prediction, into the worſhip of falſe gods, is, that the claims of Jehovah had been already eſtabliſhed, and conſequently theirs confuted, by miracles; the validity of his claims neceſſarily inferring the falſehood of theirs. It is to miracles alone,

† See below, ch. 3. ſect. 5.

alone, that Moſes here appeals; by this ſingle proof he decides the queſtion concerning the ſole right of Jehovah, to the worſhip of the Iſraelites. And his reaſoning is deſigned to prove, that the ſign or wonder of the prophet, who announced any other god, than the God of Iſrael, could not be really ſupernatural. In thoſe early ages, when eclipſes, meteors, earthquakes, inundations, and all the uncommon phenomena of nature, were repreſented by Pagan impoſtors or enthuſiaſts, as the productions of their fictitious deities; how could Moſes more effectually guard the Iſraelites againſt theſe frauds and deluſions, than by reminding them, how fully Jehovah had aſſerted and vindicated his ſole dominion over the whole natural world; and thus ſhewing them, that the events in queſtion were the effects of that order and diſpoſition, which God had eſtabliſhed at the beginning?

II.

We are in the next place to examine that warning of the Chriſtian lawgiver to his diſciples, "There "ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe prophets, and ſhall "ſhew great ſigns and wonders, inſomuch that (if it "were poſſible) they ſhall deceive the very elect *."

Here our Lord has (very erroneouſly, as I apprehend) been ſuppoſed to make his goſpel, (juſt as Moſes in the foregoing paſſages was ſuppoſed to make his law,) the criterion whereby to judge of the divinity

* Mat. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22.

nity of miracles; and to direct men to conſider the like works as marks of impoſture when wrought by others, which he had appealed to, when wrought by himſelf, as indubitable ſigns of a divine miſſion. But if miracles proved *him* to be the Meſſiah; muſt they not equally eſtabliſh the claim of any *other* perſon to that character? Were it poſſible, they ſhould be wrought in confirmation of oppoſite claims; they would mutually deſtroy each other. The wonders here ſpoken of, are emphatically ſtyled *great;* and the end propoſed by them, was the deliverance of God's people; which, to a Jew at leaſt, could not appear to be an end unworthy of a divine interpoſition. And therefore, ſuppoſing the miracles to have been really performed by falſe Chriſts and falſe prophets; the Jews muſt either have admitted their claims inforced by great miracles, or have rejected thoſe of every other. At leaſt, might it not have been expected, that our Lord, to prevent the deception of his followers, would have laid down ſome ſure and perſpicuous rule, to enable them to judge, in what caſes *great* miracles are proofs of a *divine* agency, and when they are evidences only of a *diabolical* one? When a prophet has eſtabliſhed his own miſſion by miracles; is his barely *foretelling* thoſe of his rivals and oppoſers, a ſufficient criterion whereby to judge of their author? Would it not rather be a confeſſion, that miracles are no certain ſigns of a divine miſſion?

But our Lord is not here warning his diſciples againſt admitting the *divinity* of unqueſtionable miracles, but againſt haſtily crediting the *truth* of thoſe pretences

pretences to miracles, which would be made by the perſons of whom he is ſpeaking. This appears, as well from the natural import of this prophecy in its original language; as from the hiſtory and character of the impoſtors, to whom it refers. Chriſt does not ſay, "Falſe prophets ſhall *ſhew* * (that is, really *exhibit* and *perform*) great ſigns;" but (as the original word ſhould have been rendered) "they will GIVE †," that is, appeal to, promiſe or undertake to produce, ſuch ſigns; uſing the very language of the Jewiſh legiſlator explained above, who repreſents a prophet as *giving* ‡ (that is, propoſing or appealing to)

* Had this been our Lord's meaning, he would have expreſſed it, as Joſephus does in the paſſages cited below, (p. 210. note †. and p. 211. note †.) by the word δείξειν.

† This is the moſt natural ſenſe of δωσουσι. Dr. Lardner, in a letter which is now before me, after taking notice, that although Whitby, Le Clerc, and other commentators allow, great things were done by the impoſtors, referred to by Chriſt in this prediction, yet that no miracles are aſcribed to them by Joſephus; adds, "I ſhall be obliged to Mr. Farmer, if he "will let me know his ſolution of this difficulty." In compliance with this requeſt, I communicated to him my explication of the word δωσουσι, which I had never met with in any writer, and which intirely ſolves the particular difficulty propoſed by Dr. Lardner, as well as removes the general objection againſt the authority of miracles, which unbelievers have hitherto raiſed from this paſſage. The doctor in his reply expreſſes himſelf in the following terms: "Your anſwer is very "agreeable, and will be of uſe to me." Accordingly he inſerted it in his *Teſtimonies*, V. 1. p. 67.

‡ Deut. xiii. 1. in the Septuagint.

to) a ſign or wonder, whether it did or did not come to paſs. The phraſe itſelf does not determine, whether the ſign given, be it the promiſe of a miracle, or the prediction of an event, would be confirmed or confuted, when it was expected to be accompliſhed. It might be engaged for, and yet never be exhibited. And every circumſtance of the prophecy contained in this context, ſerves to prove, that the perſons here foretold would only undertake to ſhew great ſigns, without performing what they undertook. But I ſhall argue chiefly from the hiſtory of thoſe perſons, in whoſe appearance and pretenſions this prophecy received its completion, and which muſt be allowed to be the beſt key to the interpretation of this prophetic warning.

Our Saviour here refers to thoſe impoſtors, who ſprung up in Judea in the interval between the delivery of this prophecy, and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. As early as the 45th or 46th year of the Chriſtian æra, one Theudas, who called himſelf a prophet, perſuaded great numbers to follow him to Jordan, by telling them that he would, by his own command, divide the river: but this confident boaſt ended in his own deſtruction, as well as that of many of his followers *. About nine or ten years afterwards, Judea ſwarmed with theſe deceivers, who led the people into the wilderneſs, and *undertook to exhibit divine wonders* †. One who came out of Egypt promiſed to cauſe the walls of Jeruſalem to fall down; but the deluded multitudes who followed him were

O diſperſed

* Joſephus Antiq. l. 20. c. 5. § 1.

diſperſed or deſtroyed by the Romans, " ſuffering" (to uſe the language of Joſephus) " the juſt puniſh-" ment of their folly §." The nearer the Jews were to deſtruction, ſo much the more did theſe impoſtors multiply, and ſo much the more eaſy credit did they find with thoſe, who were willing to have their miſeries ſoothed by hope. Even during the conflagration of the temple, a falſe prophet encouraged the people with miraculous ſigns of deliverance *: nor did the total deſtruction of the city cure this madneſs; as appears by the conduct of an impoſtor at Cyrene †, who " promiſed to ſhew them ſigns and appari-" tions."

There is the moſt perfect correſpondence between the impoſtors deſcribed by Joſephus, and thoſe foretold by Chriſt, in the following particulars. 1. According to Joſephus, their appearance both preceded and accompanied the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; and by Chriſt alſo they were diſtinctly foretold both as the diſtant ‡ ſigns and fore-runners, and as the nearer ‖ and more immediate attendants, of that great and awful cataſtrophe. 2. Our Saviour deſcribes them as ſeverally aſſuming the double character of a prophet and of the Meſſiah: and according to the Jewiſh hiſtorian, they both pretended to inſpiration and

§ Joſeph. Ant. c. 8. § 6. & de B. J. l. 2. c. 13. § 4, 5.

* Joſeph. de B. J. l. 6. c. 5. § 2.

† Id. ib. l. 7. c. 11. § 1. σημεῖα καὶ φάσματα δείξειν ὑπισχνούμενος.

‡ Mat. xxiv. 5. Mark xiii. 6. Luke xxi. 8.

‖ Mat. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22.

and prophecy ¶, and undertook the peculiar office of the Meſſiah *, the deliverance of God's people from their enemies. 3. "They ſhall give" (or undertake to exhibit) "great ſigns and wonders," ſays the prophecy: and the hiſtory relates the fact in perfectly correſponding language, "They *promiſed* to ſhew or "exhibit evident wonders and ſigns †." 4. Does our Saviour ſay, that by their confident promiſes of miracles, they would *deceive many* ‡ of the unbelieving Jews, and *the very elect*, or *Chriſtians themſelves* ‖, *were that poſſible;* that is, could this be well ſuppoſed of perſons, who certainly knew that the Meſſiah was already come? Joſephus informs us that theſe impoſtors drew away vaſt multitudes after § them; and that *under pretence of divine inſpiration*, they raiſed the enthuſiaſm of the people to a degree of *madneſs* **. 5. The very places of their appearance are the ſame in the prophecy, as in the hiſtory; "the

¶ As they ſtyled themſelves prophets, ſo they profeſſed to act προσχήματι θειασμοῦ, "under pretence of a divine afflatus." Joſeph, de B. J. l. 2. c. 13. § 4.

* Luke xxiv. 21. et Grot. in loc.

† Δείξειν γὰρ ἔφασαν ἐναργῆ τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα. Joſeph. Ant. l. 20. c. 8. § 6. This language of Joſephus ſerves both to explain and verify our Saviour's prediction, ſo as to remove all reaſonable doubt concerning either its meaning or truth.

‡ Matth. xxiv. 5.

‖ V. 24. compared with Rom. xvi. 13. Coll. iii. 12. 1 Theſſ. i. 4.

§ On one occaſion he mentions ſix thouſand; B. J. l. 6. c. 5. § 2. on another thirty thouſand; l. 2. c. 13. § 5.

** Δαιμονᾶν ἀνέπειθον. Id. ib. § 4.

" desart or wilderne ss,and the secret chambers or " places of security in the city *." 6. If our Saviour calls them *deceivers*, and supposes *all* their pretences (and consequently their pretences to miracles, as well as to the Messiahship) to be founded in *falsehood*: Josephus calls them by the same name †, and represents them as utterly disappointing all the promises they had made to their followers, and every expectation they had raised. Now, if no miracles were actually performed by these impostors; it is great weakness in Christians to affirm, that any were foretold by Christ; as it is virtually branding him as a false prophet. But in the sense of the prediction assigned above, it received the most perfect accomplishment in the conduct and appearance of the Jewish impostors, who only pretended to miracles. And considering how backward the Jewish Christians themselves were, to give up all hope of deliverance from their subjection to the Romans; it was an instance of the wisdom and goodness of our Saviour, to forewarn them against trusting to the fallacious promises of persons, who affirmed confidently that they were divinely raised up to accomplish such a deliverance; and by confiding in whom, the infatuated Jews were deceived and destroyed beyond all recovery or redemption.

III.

* Mat. xxiv. 26. Joseph. Ant. l. 20. c. 8. § 6. et B. J. l. 2. c. 13. § 4. et l. 6. c. 5. § 2.

† Πλάνοι γὰρ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀπατεῶνες. B. J. l. 2. c. 13. § 4. See also Antiq. l. 20. c. 8. § 6.

III.

All the falſe teachers in the apoſtolic age, whether they rejected or corrupted Chriſtianity, are repreſented as deſtitute of ſupernatural gifts.

With regard even to the true apoſtles of Chriſt, and others who really performed miracles; theſe works could not be applied by them to any other purpoſe, than the confirmation of the miſſion and doctrines of Chriſt; inaſmuch as they were always performed by his immediate power, in profeſſed atteſtation of his authority, and not without the actual exerciſe of faith in his name, at the time of their performance. How then could real miracles be performed, in oppoſition to the claims or genuine doctrines of Chriſt, by falſe apoſtles? When St. Paul ſays, "We can do nothing againſt the truth*;" does not this language imply, that no miracles could be wrought in atteſtation of falſehood? He threatens his oppoſers at Corinth, with coming to them in a ſhort time, that† "he might know, not the ſpeech "(the eloquence) of them that were puffed up, but "the (miraculous) power;" with the want of which, it is evident, he here upbraids them. He adds, "For "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in "power;" it is erected and ſupported by the immediate exertions of omnipotence: language that plainly intimates, that his oppoſers were not imme-

* 2 Cor. xiii. 8.

† 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20. ch. v. 4.

diately commiſſioned to publiſh the goſpel by God, becauſe he did not ſupport their claim by miracles. The power of miracles he elſewhere calls "the ſign of an apoſtle*;" and on a ſtill different occaſion, he thus deſcribes and diſtinguiſhes himſelf, "He that "worketh miracles amongſt you†:" could miracles then be common both to him and his opponents? He warns the Corinthians againſt giving him occaſion to exerciſe his miraculous power in their puniſhment: "What will ye? ſhall I come unto you with a rod?" This is not the language of a perſon expecting miracles to be oppoſed by miracles. Nay, he repreſents the leaders of the oppoſite party as ſupporting themſelves wholly by artifice and fraud: "‡ Such are falſe "apoſtles, deceitful workers (or labourers in the "goſpel ||) transforming themſelves into the apoſtles "of Chriſt. And no marvel, for Satan himſelf is "transformed into an angel of light." It may be doubted, whether St. Paul is here ſpeaking of any transformation of Satan, in the literal ſenſe of the word: for the falſe apoſtles did not in this ſenſe change themſelves into the apoſtles of Chriſt, or aſſume their *external ſhape and form.* But the falſe apoſtles here referred to, *pretended* to preach *gratis;* which is what St. Paul really did at Corinth: and this groundleſs pretence was the ſole foundation of their

* 2 Cor. xii. 12.

† Gal. iii. 2, 5.

‡ 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.

|| Locke upon the place.

their claim to the apoſtolical character. To prevent the Corinthians from being deceived by ſuch or any other ſpecious appearances or diſguiſes, he reminds them, that the very worſt characters might eaſily aſſume the outward ſemblance of virtue; that there was not any *temptation* *, even of the moſt *infernal kind*, which did not ſtrive to conceal its deformity, and aſſume an alluring and *celeſtial* form. It is poſſible, however, that St. Paul may here refer to an opinion, common amongſt the Heathens, that evil ſpirits could render themſelves viſible at pleaſure, and aſſume the appearance of gods and demons †. Nor is it neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the apoſtle is here delivering his own opinion; he may be barely illuſtrating his argument, by a commonly received ſentiment concerning evil ſpirits ‡.

* Dr. Doddridge upon the place.

† Porphyry (de Abſtinent. l. 2. § 39, 40.) ſpeaking of ſpiritual beings, and evil demons in particular, ſays, "All theſe "are naturally inviſible to men; but they make themſelves "viſible at pleaſure, change their forms, and perſonate the "gods." Apuleius (in Apol. Socrat.) ſays, At enim Pythagoricos mirari oppido ſolitos, ſi quis ſe negaret unquam vidiſſe dæmonem. See Jamblichus, ſect. 2. c. 3. and Porphyry cited below, ch. 4. ſect. 2. article 2.

‡ Thus our Saviour draws a compariſon between the Jews, and "the ſpirits who walk through dry places;" and the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of the "deaf adder that ſtops her ear to the voice of the charmers," (perſons who uſed forbidden arts, Deut. xviii. 11.) with regard to which the authors of the Univerſal Hiſtory obſerve, "There is no more occaſion to underſtand it literal-"ly,

Both Paul and Peter repreſent the falſe teachers as ſeducing their followers, not by miracles, but by *fair ſpeeches*, and by a condeſcenſion to mens criminal paſſions *. Jude deſcribes them as "not having the ſpirit †;" and John brands all their pretenſions as impoſture, "Thou haſt tried them which ſay they "are apoſtles, and are not; and haſt found them "liars ‡." He lays it down as un univerſal maxim, "Every ſpirit" (or pretender to a ſpiritual and divine afflatus) "that confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt "is come in the fleſh, is not of God ||." And Paul in like manner declares, "that no man ſpeaking by "the ſpirit of God, calleth Jeſus accurſed ¶." Nevertheleſs, becauſe ſuch oppoſers of Chriſtianity as theſe apoſtles ſpeak of, could not be inſpired by *God;* it has hence been inferred, that they were enabled to work miracles by the *devil.* But the former does by no means infer the latter. To underſtand theſe paſſages we muſt recollect, that John moſt certainly,

"ly, than if he had compared an evil tongue to the voice of a "ſyren, the claws of an harpy, the eyes of a baſiliſk, or any "other fabulous creature." V. 3. p. 491. 8vo ed. The words of the Pſalmiſt, however, are differently interpreted by others. See the learned Mr. Merrick's annotations on Pſalm lviii. 4, 5.

* Rom. xvi. 18. 1 Cor. iv. 9. Col. ii. 4, 8. 2 Pet. ii. 18.

† V. 19.

‡ Rev. ii. 2.

|| 1 John iv. 3.

¶ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

tainly, and Paul * poſſibly, refers to the Jewiſh antichriſts †, ſome of whom aſſumed to themſelves the character of the Meſſiah, and all of whom oppoſed the claims of Jeſus; and did it under the pretence of a *divine* afflatus and inſpiration. Now, ſince thoſe who denied Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, pretended to be prophets of the true God, (herein differing from the idolatrous prophet mentioned by Moſes ‡); the apoſtles direct their fellow Chriſtians to conclude, that ſuch pretences muſt be falſe; for this ſelf-evident reaſon, that God cannot contradict himſelf. Since Chriſtians allowed, that God had borne teſtimony to Jeſus, it was impoſſible he ſhould ever bear teſtimony againſt him. As to any intercourſe with *evil* ſpirits, or aſſiſtance from them; theſe prophets did not pretend to it; nor do the apoſtles charge them with it; but

* It is immaterial to our preſent purpoſe, whether St. Paul refers to the Jewiſh antichriſts, or to the unbelieving Jews in general, who had long taught, that the Spirit of God could reſt on none but on thoſe of their own nation, and ſtill pretended to ſome of his gifts. The apoſtle therefore with great propriety here reminds Chriſtians of two ſelf-evident truths:— "that no man ſpeaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jeſus" (one ſo highly approved of God!) "accurſed;" and "that no "man can ſay that Jeſus is the Lord," (or aſſert and maintain Chriſt's divine authority,) "but by the Holy Ghoſt." Does not this language imply, that all genuine miracles proceed from the ſpirit of God?

† See what was obſerved above in the explication of Mat. xxiv. 24. and compare Whitby on 1 John iv. 1, 2.

‡ Deut. xiii. 1.

but reſolve their pretenſions into human deluſion and forgery, as we have already ſeen.

IV.

St. Paul's prophecy * concerning the man of ſin, "whoſe coming is after the working of Satan †, with "all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders‡;" though frequently urged to ſhew, that the papal hierarchy was to be ſupported by real miracles, proves the very contrary. Whoever conſiders the nature of the papal empire, (that moſt flagitious and daring uſurpation on the government of God, and all the valuable rights of mankind!) will readily admit, that if ever the devil had a hearty zeal for any cauſe, it muſt be for this; and that he would have exerted his utmoſt power for its ſupport. Nevertheleſs the apoſtle, inſtead of allowing that popery would have the advantage of *true* miracles, affirms that the coming of the man of ſin was to be "with all power, and ſigns, "and wonders of a lie ‖;" that is, "with lying, or "fictitious

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 9, 10.

† That this phraſe, *the working of Satan* or an adverſary, does not imply a *miraculous* agency, appears from the uſe of it, Epheſ. ii. 2.

‡ Whoever compares this paſſage with Heb. ii. 4. will find the ſame terms applied both to the miracles of popery and Chriſtianity; and conſequently will be forced to maintain, that they are both *equal*, unleſs the latter alone were genuine, and the former counterfeit.

‖ This is the true rendering of the original words, ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει

"fictitious power, and ſigns, and wonders." The apoſtle does not ſay, that the wonders are wrought with an intention to deceive; but that the wonders themſelves are a lie, the ſole effect of falſehood and impoſture. The church of Rome lays claim to a miraculous power, glories in it as a mark of the true church *; and from hence infers the validity of her pretenſions. Many learned proteſtants have allowed in part the truth of this claim, and admitted that ſome real miracles have been performed in the Roman church. But the inſpired apoſtle brands them all as deceitful tricks, and fabulous legends. Such, many of the beſt atteſted are allowed to be, by the members of the Roman communion †; and ſuch with

δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασι ψεύδους. The word, *lie*, refers equally to all the preceding terms, and ought not to have been limited to the laſt. That "the power, and ſigns, and wonders of a lie," denote "lying" or "fictitious power, ſigns and wonders," by a uſual hebraiſm; appears from Deut. xxxii. 20. 2 Sam. xii. 15. Pſ. v. 6. Luke xvi. 6. Epheſ. ii. 2. ch. iv. 24. Col. i. 3; and from the context alſo, where the like form of ſpeech is uſed. "The man of ſin" denotes a notoriouſly ſinful man: and the deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs ſignifies unrighteous deceptions. Nay, in the very place in queſtion, the preſent tranſlation renders "wonders of a lie," "lying wonders."

* Undecima nota eſt gloria miraculorum. Bellarmin. de notis eccleſiæ, l. 4. c. 14.

† They confeſs many even of thoſe miracles, which were atteſted by witneſſes upon oath, to be mere impoſtures. Maraccius, ſpeaking of certain bones, which were miſtaken for thoſe of ſome eminent ſaints, ſays, Vix credi poteſt, quot ſtatim miracula

with equal reaſon we may ſafely pronounce them all. It is not therefore the power of miracles, (as ſome maintain *) but *the making falſe pretences to it*, that St. Paul here (and elſewhere †) aſſigns as one of the characteriſtics

racula de iis in vulgus emanaverint, quæ etiam adjuratis teſtibus confirmabantur. Et tamen nullum hic erat, nec eſſe poterat, verum miraculum. Prodr. pars 2. Melchior Canus complains, that the lives of the philoſophers, and the hiſtories of the Ceſars, are written by Laertius and Suetonius with greater regard to truth, than the lives of the ſaints by the Catholics. And ſpeaking of *the golden legend*, he ſays, it contains for the moſt part, rather monſters of miracles, than true miracles. Other learned papiſts have made the like complaints, as may be ſeen in Geddes's Tracts, V. iii. tract 2. p. 49. Even the miracles aſcribed to the miſſionaries of the Roman church in India, where they are moſt wanted, are denied by their graveſt writers, Hoſpinian de Origin. Jeſuitar. p. 330. Middleton's prefat. Diſ. to his Letter from Rome, p. 97. and Acoſta de procuranda Indorum ſalute, cited by the Criterion, p. 77, I add, that whenever any one of the orders of the Roman church endeavours to ſupport its peculiar tenets by ſupernatural works; the other orders ſeldom fail to detect the cheat, or to treat it with all imaginable contempt. Will any one undertake, to produce one popiſh miracle, which is either more credible in its nature, or more ſtrongly atteſted; than thoſe which learned papiſts themſelves have condemned as impudent falſehoods?

* "Admitting (ſays a very learned writer) that any of the "Romiſh miracles were undeniable matters of fact;—yet I "know not what the Biſhop of Rome would gain by it, but a "better title to be thought antichriſt." Biſhop Newton's Diſſertations on the Prophecies, V. 2. p. 279, and Vol. 3. p. 223.

† See 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2. explained above, ch. 3. ſect. 1. p. 111.

characteriſtics of the man of ſin; and by which he is remarkably diſtinguiſhed from Mohammed and other impoſtors, to whom this prophecy has been improperly applied.

V.

The papacy ſeems to be farther characteriſed in the Revelation of St. John *, "He doeth great wonders (or ſigns †) ſo that he maketh fire come down "from heaven on the earth, in the ſight of men; "and he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by "means of thoſe miracles (or ſigns) which he has "power to do in the ſight of the beaſt."

Whatever be the true ſenſe of this obſcure paſſage, it ought not to have any meaning aſſigned it, repugnant to the numerous more plain declarations of the divine word. If the prediction of St. Paul which we laſt examined, brands all the miracles of popery as *forgeries*; this of St. John cannot allow them to be *realities*. Beſides, there is this material difference in the two caſes: the prophecy of St. Paul is delivered in much plainer terms, not under the cover of ſymbolical repreſentations; but the revelations made to St. John, were in the way of *viſion*, in which there was frequent uſe of *emblems* and *ſymbols*, with which we find the whole Apocalypſe abounds. And therefore

* Ch. xiii. 13, 14.

† Σημεῖα. The ſame word is uſed in the original in both verſes, though rendered by our tranſlators *wonders* in the 13th, and *miracles* in the 14th verſe.

fore it is more natural to give a figurative, than a literal conſtruction to this language of St. John. "The making fire to come down from heaven," may poſſibly refer to the *anathemas* and *excommunications* of the Roman church, ſtyled the *thunders* of the Vatican, which are ſhocking imprecations for fire from heaven, and were thought to expoſe men to its hotteſt vengeance; (as a ſymbol of which they uſed in pronouncing their excommunications, to ſwing down a lighted torch from above*) and which have actually ſet whole kingdoms in a flame, being inforced by princes and perſons in authority, who in the prophetic language are repreſented by *the heavens*. On either, or both theſe accounts, but more eſpecially the former, the fire may be ſaid to come down from thence. The *great ſigns* he is here ſaid to perform, include theſe and other amazing artifices uſed by the pope, to perſuade an ignorant and credulous laity, that the vengeance of heaven will be armed againſt all his oppoſers. The ſucceſs of theſe frauds, and the credit they would gain with the members of the Roman communion, may be intimated in their being ſpoken of as done, "in the ſight of men," and in "the ſight of the beaſt." However this may be, I can ſee no ground to conclude, that amongſt the ſigns here referred to, we are to include true miracles†; both

* Sir Iſ. Newton, in his Obſervations on the Apocalypſe, p. 319.

† The word, σημεῖα, denotes ſigns and tokens, even though they are not miraculous; as we ſhewed above on Deut. xiii.

1;

both becauſe the word is applied to other events; and the ſign here particularly ſpecified, "the "making fire to come down from heaven," if underſtood figuratively, agreeably to the ſtyle of St. John's prophecy, was not miraculous. Moreover true miracles are never repreſented as means of *deluſion*, but of conviction.

We have now diſtinctly examined the ſeveral paſſages of Scripture, which are generally thought, to allow the claims of falſe prophets to inſpiration and miracles; and, I hope, it appears, either that thoſe paſſages do not refer to any ſuch claims, or expreſsly deny their validity. Whether theſe prophets ſpoke in the name of the true God, or in the name of falſe gods, the Scriptures repreſent them as totally deſtitute of ſupernatural knowledge and power, and expreſsly reſolve all their pretences to them, into human artifice and falſehood *. This has been already ſhewn,

1; and it is in the Apocalypſe applied to ſurpriſing events, ch. xii. 1, 2. ch. xv. 1. There may be a reference in this chapter to thoſe ſtrange appearances, (ſuch as the bowing of crucifixes, the ſhaking and ſtirring their hands and feet, motions performed by ſecret ſprings; and a thouſand other things of the like kind;) which though mere human artifices, are repreſented as the effects of the divine power. The fraud practiſed by the Roman clergy with regard to theſe things, was expoſed in ſome remarkable inſtances at the Reformation. See Burnet's Hiſtory of the Reform. V. 1. p. 232.

* Some of our lateſt and moſt approved writers upon miracles affirm, that God will not ſuffer falſe prophets to work miracles, "ſo as to lay men under a neceſſity of being deceived, "or without giving honeſt men plain evidence of the impoſ- "ture."

ſhewn, both with reſpect to their pretended miracles and prophecies. I will here add a few paſſages, which more immediately refer to the latter. Moſes aſcribes them to *the arrogance* or *preſumption* * of the prophet. Jeremiah calls them, "the viſion of his own heart†," not the ſupernatural ſuggeſtions of the devil. And Ezekiel deſcribes the falſe prophets, as propheſying "out of their own hearts, and following their own "ſpirit, and as having ſeen nothing ‡."

Before

"ture." See Mr. Hallet on miracles, and Dr. Benſon's Life of Chriſt, p. 202, 203, 219, 220, 222, 234, 235, 236. The Scriptures ſeem to me to deny the power of falſe prophets, to perform miracles under any circumſtances whatever. And indeed if "the whole nature of miracles lay in being ſuch "things, as are above the power of men," (as the doctor affirms, p. 236, compare p. 204;) if they may be performed by falſe prophets, when they do not neceſſarily ſubject honeſt men to deluſion; and if performed by ſuch prophets, are to have no regard paid to them, (p. 202;) how are they, in their own nature, ſigns of *a divine* interpoſition, and a divine miſſion? Beſides, there could be very little danger of any man's being deceived by the miracles of a falſe prophet, if he was clearly and certainly perſuaded, that theſe works are no diſtinguiſhing teſt of a divine interpoſition; (as was ſhewn above, p. 88.) There would, in this caſe, be more probability of mens rejecting the miracles of a true prophet; from an apprehenſion, that infinite wiſdom would not employ ambiguous proofs of a divine miſſion.

* Deut. xviii. 22. "The prophet has ſpoken it preſumptuouſly;" per ſuperbiam vel tumorem animi ſui.

† Ch. xxxiii. 16. In ch. xiv. 14, he ſays, "They propheſy unto you a falſe viſion,—and the deceit of their heart."

‡ Ezek. xiii. 2, 3. See alſo Zechar. xiii. 4.

Before we proceed any farther; let us recollect how far we are advanced in examining into the ſenſe of Scripture, concerning the author of miracles, whether of power or knowledge. We have attempted to ſhew, that the Scripture denies the ability of performing any miracles, to angels, whether good or evil; to the ſpirits of departed men; to the Heathen deities; to magicians, who pretended to an intercourſe with them; and laſtly, to all falſe prophets, upon whatever principles they grounded their pretenſions. Now theſe are the only agents, who have ever been conceived as capable of working miracles, either in oppoſition to God, or without an immediate commiſſion from him. And conſequently the Scripture, by denying the miraculous power of all theſe, does, in effect, deny, that any ſingle miracle has ever been performed without the immediate interpoſition of God. Farther evidence of this important point will occur in the following ſections.

SECT. V.

The Scriptures represent the one true God, as the sole creator and sovereign of the world, which he governs by fixed and invariable laws. To him they appropriate all miracles, and urge them as demonstrations of his Divinity and sole dominion over nature, in opposition to the claims of all other superior beings. The ancient controversy between the prophets of God and idolaters, stated.

IN direct opposition to the numerous fictitious deities of the Pagans, whether they were supposed to possess an original, or only a delegated power and authority; the prophets of the true God affirm, that he alone is God: "He is Jehovah, and there is no "God besides him: He is Jehovah, and there is "none else*." The Heathens maintained the existence of local† deities, whose power and presence were circumscribed within narrow bounds. Aristotle very justly observes, "that it was by no means agreeable "to the system of religion established by law, to sup- "pose God to be one most powerful and excellent "being; the gods in that system being mutually bet- "ter one than another, as to many things‡." Accordingly

* Deut. iv. 35. Is. xlv. 5, 6, 18, 21, 22. compare ch. xliii. 10—13. ch. xliv. 8. 2 Sam. vii. 22.

† 1 Kings xx. 23.

‡ When arguing against Zeno, Aristotle says, εἰπεῖν ἅπαντα ἐπικράτιστον

cordingly we find, that as each nation * had its chief deity; ſo ſeveral of the gods held by the ſame people were each of them ſupreme in their reſpective provinces, and independent of the reſt. One was ſupreme ruler over *the heavens*, another over *the air* and *winds*, and others ſtill different from theſe over *the ſea* and *earth* and *hell*. But the language of revelation is, "Jehovah he is God in heaven above, "and upon the earth beneath, there is none elſe †:" he exiſts and operates in all places, without limits, and without controul ‡. To underſtand this language, it is neceſſary to recollect, that the word, God, in Scripture denotes a governor or king; nor is more included in the general idea, than authority and dominion. Moſes is called *a god to Pharoah* ‖; becauſe he was appointed to controul and govern him. Judges and kings are frequently called *gods* with reſpect to their ſubjects, over whom they rule ¶. And therefore when the ſacred writers aſſert, that there is no other

P 2

ἐπικράτιστον τὸν θεὸν λαμβάνει, τοῦτο δυνατώτατον καὶ βέλτιστον λέγων, οὐ δοκεῖ δὲ τοῦτο κατὰ τὸν νόμον, ἀλλὰ πολλὰ κρείττους εἶναι ἀλλήλων οἱ θεοί. De Xenophane, Zenone, et Gorgia, c. 4. inter por. V. 2. p. 841, 842. ed. Paris.

* Judges xi. 24.

† Deut. iv. 39.

‡ 1 Kings viii. 27. Pſ. cxxxix. 1—12. Iſ. xliii. 13.

‖ Exod. vii. 1.

¶ Exod. xxi. 6. ch. xxii. 9, 28. Pſ. lxxxii. 1, 6. Compare John x. 34, 35.

other God but Jehovah; they mean, that there is no ſuperior being beſides him, who has any power or dominion over mankind. Had there been other ſuperior beings, who were veſted with power over the human race; the Scripture, we have ſeen *, would have allowed, that they were our gods or rulers.

The Heathens either believed the eternity † of the world, or aſcribed its origin, and the generation of animals ‡, to elementary and ſidereal deities. According to the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of theology, the world was *begotten*, not created; at once *the offspring* and *the parent* of gods, and *itſelf* a god ‖. On the other hand, the ſacred penmen aſcribe its creation to the ſole operation (or rather to the almighty fiat ¶) of the one eternal Jehovah: "He made the ſea, his hand "formed the dry land **. He formed the light, and "created darkneſs ††. He created the heavens, and "the earth, and all the hoſt of them ‡‡;" that is, the whole

* Ch. 3. ſect. 2. p. 237, 238.

† Diodorus Siculus, p. 6. ed. Rhodomani.

‡ See above, p. 174.

‖ See above, 111—114. What we call the creation or formation of the world, was in the Pagan ſyſtem its *generation*, or *a coſmogony*. And their coſmogony or generation of the world was *a theogony*, or *generation of gods*.

¶ Pſ. xxxiii. 6, 9. Pſ. cxlviii. 5. Gen. i. 3.

** Pſ. xcv. 5.

†† Iſ. xlv. 7.

‡‡ Gen. i. 1. ch. ii. 1. Pſ. xxxiii. 6.

whole world, all the parts which compoſe, and all the creatures that inhabit it, whatever divine attributes and operations might be fooliſhly aſcribed to any of them by the Heathens. God aſſerts his ſole prerogative in ſuch language as this: "I am Jehovah who maketh all things, who ſtretcheth forth "the heavens alone, who ſpreadeth abroad the earth "by myſelf*." This truth is often inculcated, with the expreſs deſign of guarding the Iſraelites from worſhipping the objects of nature†.

To theſe falſe gods, and to demons the Heathens aſcribed the government of the world, the direction of all human affairs, the calamities and proſperity of perſons and nations. But the Scriptures celebrate Jehovah as the univerſal ſovereign, who exerciſes an abſolute dominion over all without any rival, without any co-adjutor or partner of his throne; "I am Jehovah, and beſides me there is no Saviour.—There "is none can deliver out of my hand: I will work, "and who ſhall let it‡? I make peace, and create "evil‖." It was, indeed, the main deſign of the Jewiſh diſpenſation, to convince the Iſraelites and the whole world, that as Jehovah created the world at firſt, ſo he reſerved the government of it in his own hands; and that there was no ſuperior inviſible being whatever, beſides Jehovah, on whoſe favour, the

* Iſ. xliv. 24.

† Deut. iv. 19. Jerem. xiv. 22.

‡ Iſ. xliii. 11, 13. ‖ Ch. xlv. 7.

good or evil ſtate of their lives did in any degree depend. This is the doctrine every where inculcated, in direct oppoſition to thoſe who taught, that there were inviſible beings, who were the authors both of bleſſings and calamities to mankind. The order of the natural world is repreſented, as fixed "by his "decree, which ſhall not paſs away;" and governed by his laws "which ſhall not be broken," by laws "which he has eſtabliſhed for ever and ever*;" and conſequently which cannot be controuled by any authority, except that by which they were at firſt ordained. If you ſay, that the allowing a liberty to ſuperior created intelligences to interpoſe in human affairs, is one of thoſe very laws which God has ordained: I anſwer, that if they can do this of themſelves, and without an immediate commiſſion from God; then what the Scriptures affirm is not true; there are other ſuperior inviſible beings beſides God, who can diſpenſe both good and evil to mankind; and the order of events in the natural world is *not fixed* at all, but is dependent upon the pleaſure of thoſe ſuperior beings†.

With regard to miracles, or deviations from the ordinary courſe of nature; the Scriptures refer them to God as their author. Nor do they aſcribe them to him *eminently*, as ſome‡ pretend; but abſolutely *appropriate*

* Pſ. cxlviii. 6. Pſ. lxxxix. 37. Pſ. cxix. 90, 91. Jerem. xxxi. 35, 36. ch. xxxiii. 25.

† See above, ch. 2. ſect. 3.

‡ Dr. Sykes on miracles, and others.

propriate them to him *alone*. Witneſs the ſong of Moſes, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, amongſt "the gods? who is like unto thee,—doing won- "ders*?" What words can more ſtrongly deny to all other beings the power of working miracles, and challenge it as the ſole prerogative of the true God, than the following paſſages? "Bleſſed be Jehovah "God, the God of Iſrael, who only doeth wondrous "things†. Thou art great, and doeſt wondrous "things, thou art God alone‡." Such language often occurs, "Thou art the God that doeſt wonders‖. "To him who alone doeth great wonders§." Whenever the ſacred writers occaſionally mention any particular miracles, whether of power or knowledge; they affirm concerning every one of them ſeparately, what they do concerning all of them in general. Thus they affirm it to be the ſole and excluſive prerogative of God, to raiſe the dead¶, to open the eyes

* Exod. xv. 11. That by *wonders*, in this and the following paſſages, we are to underſtand miracles, appears from the connection in which the word is uſed. The miracles more eſpecially referred to are thoſe wrought in favour of the Iſraelites; concerning which Moſes declares, that all the annals of time could afford no inſtance of a like nature, Deut. iv. 32—36.

† Pſ. lxxii. 18.

‡ Pſ. lxxxvi. 10.

‖ Pſ. lxxvii. 14.

§ Pſ. cxxxvi. 4.

¶ Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6. 2 Cor. i. 9.

of the blind *, to tread upon the waves of the ſea †, to ſtill the noiſe of its waves ‡, to reveal ſecret and diſtant tranſactions ||, to foretel future events §, and to ſearch the heart of man. Theſe declarations of Scripture, though they are particularly levelled againſt the falſe pretences to prophecies and miracles amongſt the Pagans, are no more to be reconciled with the notion of the devil's poſſeſſing a ſupernatural power, than with the opinion of any Heathen gods poſſeſſing that power. If any being whatever can perform miracles, beſides God, it is not true that God alone can perform them.

As the Scriptures repreſent miracles as works peculiar to God; ſo they urge them as proofs of his ſole Divinity, or of his claim to the diſtinguiſhing character of Jehovah. To give us a clearer idea of this very important point, we muſt look back to the firſt account of miracles. When Moſes, on his being appointed God's ambaſſador to the people of Iſrael, and the court of Egypt, deſired to be inſtructed by what title he ſhould deſcribe him; God was pleaſed to aſſume a name, which of all others was the moſt expreſſive of his nature, I AM, or JEHOVAH ¶.

Both

* Pſ. cxlvi. 8.

† Job ix. 8.

‡ Pſ. lxv. 9. Pſ. cvii. 29.

|| Dan. ii. 28, 29, 47.

§ If. xlii. 9. ch. xlv. 21. ch. xlvi. 9, 10.

¶ Exod. iii. 13, 14, 15. In the 13th verſe what is commonly

Both theſe names are in ſenſe the ſame; and expreſs "his eternal, underived and immutable exiſtence "and excellence *." They likewiſe aſſert this as his ſole prerogative; and therefore neceſſarily imply (what ſome think they directly expreſs) "his giving "being to all other things †," or his being the ſovereign

ly tranſlated, I AM THAT I AM, is rendered by Mr. Purver, I AM HE WHO AM. Accordingly God ordered Moſes to tell the Iſraelites, I AM has ſent me unto you. Though the word *ehjeh* be in the future, yet according to the genius of the Hebrew tongue, it is applicable to the preſent tenſe.

* Eſt autem hoc nomen, Ehjeh aſcher Ehjeh, derivatum a verbo hajah, quod ſignificat eſſentiam vel exiſtentiam. Maimon. Mor. Nevoc. p. 1. c. 63.

† Ainſworth and others are of opinion, that Jehovah is a participle of hajah in *piel;* and that it does not only ſignify *to be*, but *to cauſe to be.* Univerſal Hiſt. V. 3. p. 360, 361. In the foregoing part of that note, p. 358, the learned authors condemn our verſion for rendering Jehovah by LORD, and the LXX. for rendering it κύριος; though biſhop Beveridge (V. 1. p. 111.) alledges, that κύριος comes from κύρω *to be*, as Jehovah from hajah. The laſt mentioned writer obſerves, p. 112, that the word, Jehovah, is never uſed with any other genitive caſe after it, but *ſabaoth*, though this occurs ſo frequently. The title of Jehovah or LORD of hoſts (or ſabaoth) does not denote *the God of battle*; as thoſe aſſert it does, who would degrade the God of Iſrael to a level with the Heathen god of war, whoſe peculiar province it was, to preſide over battles. This very magnificent title is given to God, on account of his being the creator and ſovereign of all other beings; the monarch, not of ſome particular people and province, but of the whole univerſe. He created "the heavens, and the earth, and all the hoſt of them," Gen. ii. 1. "He is the former of all

reign creator and abſolute lord of the univerſe. This was deſigned to prevent both the Iſraelites and Egyptians, from degrading him to the level of the *tutelary* deities of the Pagans, (whoſe influence was thought to be confined to a particular country and people;) and by aſſerting his proper diſtinguiſhing character, to deny the claims of all their gods to any ſhare in the creation and government of the world. In direct oppoſition to theſe falſe gods, mere fictions of the human imagination, the God of Iſrael ſtyles himſelf

all things,—the LORD of hoſts is his name," Jerem. li. 19. ch. x. 16. " Thus ſaith Jehovah, who giveth the ſun for a light by day,—the LORD of hoſts is his name," Jerem. xxxi. 35. See ch. xxxii. 18, 19. If. xlii. 5. ch. xliv. 24. ch. xlv. 5. Dan. iv. 35. The Engliſh reader ſhould be reminded, that whenever LORD, in capital letters, occurs in our tranſlation, Jehovah is uſed in the original, which I have generally retained in the paſſages cited in the ſequel.

After I had drawn up the preceding part of this note, I found, that the celebrated Le Clerc was of the ſame ſentiment with Ainſworth, with reſpect to the meaning and derivation of Jehovah; though the former declares, he had never met with it in any author. I will tranſcribe a part of his note on Exod. vi. 3. Dubium non eſt quin vox ab היה fuit derivetur, quo factum ut ſuſpicarer Deum vocabulum יהוה ſibi ſumſiſſe, non quod ſua natura ſit, adeoque æternitate gaudeat, ſed quod efficiat ut res ſint, quaſi eſſet futurum Hiphil aut Pihel faciet ut ſit. We may, however, allow, that the word, Jehovah, was only deſigned to expreſs God's eternal and immutable exiſtence, and to aſſert this as his ſole prerogative; inaſmuch as it neceſſarily follows from hence, that all other beings owe their exiſtence to his ſovereign pleaſure. And the miracles deſigned to prove the former, ſerve to aſcertain the latter.

ſelf Jehovah *, " him who is †, and from whom all " other beings are derived." This conſtruction of the word is confirmed by the ſequel: God ſaid to Moſes, " I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abra- " ham, unto Iſaac, and unto Jacob, by the name (or " under the character) of God ALMIGHTY; but by " my name (or character of) JEHOVAH was I not " known unto them ‡." God had called himſelf by the name, Jehovah, to the Patriarchs ‖; and they had invoked him by it: in what ſenſe then was it unknown to them? Critics have ſuppoſed, that it refers to God's giving being or life to his *promiſes*, by their actual accompliſhment §. But this ſeems a very groundleſs limitation of the word. Underſtand it in its juſt latitude, and God will appear to ſpeak to the following effect: " I took your fathers under my powerful " protection,

* " I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory will I " not give to another, neither my praiſe to graven images." Iſaiah xlii, 8.

† As on other occaſions he is ſtyled the *living* God, in oppoſition to *dead* men, whom the Heathens worſhipped as gods.

‡ Exod. vi. 3.

‖ Gen. xv. 7, 8. chap. xxvi. 24. ch. xxii. 14. ch. xxviii. 13.

§ Both Ainſworth and Le Clerc ſuppoſe, that the word, Jehovah, expreſſes God's cauſing his promiſes to receive their accompliſhment: but many of the paſſages cited by the latter, and particularly Iſ. xlii. 5. ch. xlv. 5—7. Jerem. xxxi. 35, ſhew, that it muſt be taken in a ſtill more extenſive ſenſe, and that it expreſſes his character as univerſal creator.

" protection, and granted them marks of my pecu-
" liar favour; hereby acting rather under the cha-
" racter of *their God*, than as *the one eternal Deity*,
" *and only sovereign of the universe*. And though
" your pious ancestors always entertained just ideas
" of me as Jehovah; yet I did not make this my
" true character *known* * and *evident*, in the conspi-
" cuous manner I am now going to do. To your
" fathers I revealed myself chiefly by *private dreams*
" *and visions:* but now I shall fully vindicate and
" proclaim my eternal Divinity, and my boundless
" dominion, by the most *public and stupendous mira-*
" *cles*." It was necessary to explain, what is includ-
ed in the term, Jehovah; inasmuch as the miracles
of Moses were designed to prove, that this term was
appropriate to the God of Israel.

To the Israelites God commanded Moses to say,
" I AM hath sent me unto you; Jehovah, the God
" of your fathers appeared unto me †." Moses was
farther instructed to tell the Israelites, " Ye shall
" know, that I am Jehovah your God, which bring-
" eth you out from the burdens of the Egyptians ‡."
The miraculous means of their deliverance were de-
signed, as Moses says in express terms, for the con-
viction

* *To know* often signifies *to make known*: " I determined not to know any thing amongst you, save Jesus Christ," that is, this was what I determined to " make known amongst you," 1 Cor. ii. 2. See also ch. viii. 3, and Locke upon it.

† Exod. iii. 14, 15.

‡ Exod. vi. 7.

viction of the Iſraelites, or "that they might know, "that Jehovah he is God, and that there is none "elſe beſides him*." When Moſes went to Pharaoh, and told him that Jehovah, the God of Iſrael, demanded the releaſe of his people; and the king of Egypt aſked, "Who is Jehovah," and ſaid, "I know not Jehovah:" God declares to Moſes, "The "Egyptians ſhall know that I am Jehovah, when I "ſtretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring "out the children of Iſrael from amongſt them†." Nay, each particular miracle is frequently alledged as a full demonſtration of this grand point. God (by his prophet) ſaid to Pharaoh, IN THIS (that is, by turning the waters of the river into blood) "thou ſhalt know that I am Jehovah‡." The miraculous plagues

* Deut. iv. 35. compare Exod. x. 1, 2. ch. xi. 7. 2 Sam. vii. 22—24.

† Ch. v. 1, 2. ch. vii. 5. ch. ix. 14. ch. xiv. 4, 18, 25.

‡ Exod. vii. 17. In like manner Moſes promiſed Pharaoh, to remove the ſecond plague, that of frogs, "that he might "know there was none like unto Jehovah," (ch. viii. 10.) or none beſides him who could perform true miracles, (compare ch. xv. 11.)—The ſwarms of flies were ſent upon Egypt, while Goſhen was preſerved from them, "to the end thou mayeſt know," (as God ſaid to Pharaoh) "that I am Jehovah, in the midſt of the earth," (ch. viii. 22.) or, "the ſovereign of "the whole earth, not of one particular diſtrict only." The metaphor, as Paulus Fagius obſerves upon the place, is taken a regibus, qui ſedes ſuas fere habent in mediis provinciis, ut ex æquo illis proſpicere poſſint.—To the ſame effect, it is ſaid, the hail ſhould be removed, that Pharaoh might know, "that the earth is Jehovah's." ch. ix. 29.

plagues of Egypt were not designed, merely or principally to accomplish the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt; which might have been effected with fewer (or without any visible) deviations from the ordinary course of nature. The principal end which God had in view, was infinitely more important, and the very same with that which he proposed by taking the Israelites to be his peculiar people, viz. the manifestation of himself to the world. For it was not from any partial regards to them, that they were at first separated from the rest of mankind, but to accomplish the designs of God's general providence, and (amongst other important purposes) to recover and preserve the knowlege of the true God, and to propagate it amongst the Heathen nations, (and thereby to prepare the world for the coming of Christ.) The nations were already sunk into the grossest idolatry, such as gave a sanction to the foulest crimes. Egypt was the parent and nurse of this idolatry. From hence it was propagated through many other nations. By their residence in this country, the Israelites themselves *were defiled with its idols* *. Jehovah, therefore, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, was pleased to accomplish their redemption, in a manner the most proper to convince them, and the Egyptians, and the other nations, of the evil and folly of idolatry, and to make himself known and adored as the only living God †. Pharaoh

* Ezek. xx. 7. ch. xxiii. 2, 3. Josh. xxiv. 14.

† See Exod. ix. 14, 16. ch. xi. 7. ch. xiv. 4, 18. and compare Is. xix. 21. Ps. xxii. 27, 28.

raoh was preſerved, after he deſerved to have been cut off for his oppreſſion and impiety, that by the new wonders his obſtinacy would occaſion, " God's " name might be declared through all the earth *."

The

* Exod. ix. 16. Though the paſſages cited above, are fully ſufficient to prove, that the reſcue of the Iſraelites from their cruel bondage, was not (what too many have repreſented it) the whole deſign of God in the puniſhment of the Egyptians; and there can be no neceſſity therefore of producing any farther proofs of this point: yet I cannot forbear obſerving, that what has been advanced upon it, ſeems to be confirmed by what God ſays to Moſes, Exod. xii. 12. " I will ſmite all " the firſt born of the land of Egypt, both man and beaſt: and " againſt all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I " am Jehovah." Some indeed think, that by gods we are here to underſtand the *princes* and *rulers* of Egypt: but they were very few in number, in compariſon with the multitudes who ſuffered the loſs of their firſt born. Others are of opinion, that God threatens the *idols* of Egypt here, (as he does elſewhere, Iſ. xix. 1. Jerem. xliii. 13.) and that they ſuffered ſome ſuch judgment as befel Dagon, 1 Sam. v. 3, 4. This however is not ſupported by the hiſtory. Why ſhould we not underſtand God as ſpeaking concerning *the deities* of Egypt? Let it be conſidered, that the miraculous judgments hitherto inflicted upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, were the wiſeſt means that could be employed to convince them of the claims of Jehovah, and of the utter impotence of their own gods. For the Nile, the elements, and other objects of nature which they worſhipped, were themſelves employed by Jehovah as the inſtruments of their puniſhment. The death of the firſt born, both of man and beaſt, was a farther condemnation of their falſe religion. For in ancient times the prieſthood was the privilege of primogeniture; in Egypt, their gods were taken from amongſt the firſt born of their flocks and herds; and theſe animal gods were worſhipped with a reference to their elementa-

ry

The effect they produced was anſwerable to this intention: for both the Iſraelites, and many of the Egyptians "feared Jehovah, and believed Jehovah *."

The miracles of ſucceeding prophets had the ſame moſt benevolent intention, with thoſe of Moſes. The paſſage of the Iſraelites over Jordan, as well as that through the Red Sea, and their diſpoſſeſſion of the Canaanites, had this ultimate view, "that all the "people of the earth might know the hand of Jeho-"vah, that it is mighty †." When God interpoſed for the deliverance of his people; it was that both they and all the kingdoms of the earth "might know "that he was Jehovah ‡." Accordingly good men prayed to God to "maintain the cauſe of Iſrael at all "times, that all the people of the earth might know "that

ry and ſidereal deities. The fatal cataſtrophe therefore which befel the firſt born of Egypt, from which the Iſraelites were preſerved, was the execution of judgment againſt all the gods, as well as againſt the people of that country. Thus was the great controverſy concerning the claims of Jehovah, as ſole monarch of the univerſe, and his right to demand the releaſe of his people, finally determined. Thoſe on whom ſuch means of conviction could produce no laſting effect, were certainly ripe for utter exciſion.

* Exod. ix. 20, 21. ch. xii. 38. ch. xiv. 31. The like effect was produced by other miracles, Joſh. ii. 10, 11. 1 Sam. xii. 18. 2 Chron. xx. 29.

† Joſh. iv. 23, 24. Exod. xxxiv. 10.

‡ 2 Kings xix. 15—19, 35. compare 1 Kings xx. 13, 28. See alſo Pſ. lxxxiii. 18.

" that Jehovah is God, and that there is none elſe *." And indeed the Iſraelites would have been deſtroyed, on account of their great propenſity to idolatry, had not God intended by their miraculous protection or chaſtiſement, as they were obedient or diſobedient, to aſſert and vindicate his own Divinity in the eyes of all the nations. The concluſion to be drawn from every ſingle act of miraculous power, by thoſe who attended to its true nature and deſign, is the ſame as Naaman expreſſed, when his leproſy was miraculouſly cured: " Behold! now I know there is no God " in all the earth, but in Iſrael †." The king of Iſrael in particular conſidered the cure of a leproſy as a proof of divine power, " Am I God, to kill and to " make alive, that this man doth ſend unto me, to

* 1 Kings viii. 59, 60. Notwithſtanding the numerous paſſages from the Old Teſtament cited above, together with a multitude of others, aſſert the God of Iſrael to be " Jehovah, " the univerſal governor of the world, and the one only living " and true God;" and notwithſtanding the Heathen gods are a thouſand times reproached in Scripture as mere nullities: yet the celebrated Voltaire has, in different works, endeavoured to perſuade the world, that the Jews and their prophets acknowledged the *local tutelary* deities of other countries; and at the ſame time inſinuated, that they worſhipped their own God under no higher character than thoſe. His great diſingenuity in quoting the Scriptures, is well expoſed by the learned Mr. Findlay, in his " Vindication of the Sacred Books," p. 98. Would writers of ſuch eminence as Mr. Voltaire, reſt the cauſe of infidelity on the groſſeſt miſrepreſentations, were they conſcious of being able to ſupport it by fair reaſoning?

† 2 Kings v. 15.

" recover a man of his leproſy *?" And though the gods of Egypt and Canaan were worſhipped by the moſt immoral rites, with which the worſhip of Jehovah could not be charged; yet the prophets of God never urge this circumſtance either in confutation of their claims to divinity, or in proof of his; but refer the deciſion of both thoſe claims to miracles alone. Whatever difference there may be between ſome miracles and others with reſpect to grandeur, the Old Teſtament conſtantly repreſents all miracles, whether of knowledge or of power, as proofs that the God of Iſrael was Jehovah †. The New Teſtament alſo holds the ſame language, when it ſtyles miracles the works of God ‡, and ſpeaks of them as deſigned, to recover idolaters to his faith ‖ and worſhip.

How very different a view of miracles is this, from that given us by thoſe learned moderns who aſſert, that they argue only the interpoſition of ſome power more than human; that the loweſt orders of ſuperior intelligences may perform great miracles; and higher

* V. 7.

† Iſ. xli. 21—26. ch. xlii. 8, 9. ch. xliii. 9—13. ch. xliv. 8. ch. xlv. 18, 21, 22. ch. xlvi. 9, 10. ch. xlviii. 3. Jer. x. 5—16. Dan. ii. 11. 27, 28, 29. 47. In theſe paſſages, revealing ſecrets, foretelling future events, delivering and ſaving, and the doing either good or evil in a ſupernatural manner; are not only aſſerted as the ſole prerogatives of the true God; but urged as the deciſive proofs of deity.

‡ See below, ſect. 6.

‖ 1 Pet. i. 21. 1 Theſſ. i. 9.

higher orders of beings, greater miracles ſtill; that no miracle recorded in Scripture can be pronounced beyond the power of all created beings in the univerſe to produce; and that in no caſe whatever, can the immediate interpoſition of God be diſtinguiſhed certainly by the works themſelves *? When the adverſaries of revelation uſe ſuch language, with a view to deſtroy its evidence, they ſpeak in character. But what raiſes our wonder is, its being held by ſome of its ableſt votaries and advocates, notwithſtanding that revelation ſtrongly aſſerts the ſole dominion of Jehovah over nature, and every deviation from the laws of nature, (that is, every miracle) to be in itſelf a demonſtration of his being its creator and lord. Which of theſe two opinions is moſt conſonant to reaſon, is a point diſcuſſed in the ſecond chapter. We only obſerve here, that they cannot both be true. Can thoſe works be the ſole prerogatives of Jehovah, and a proof of his ſole and unrivalled ſovereignty; which *others* beſides him, and even when acting in oppoſition to him, have a power of performing as well as he? And can we ſucceſsfully maintain the argument from miracles in favour of revelation, if we do not adhere to the uſe which revelation itſelf makes of miracles?

The moſt able of our modern writers ſeem not to have attended to the true ſtate of the antient controverſy between the prophets of God and idolaters. Even the very learned and ſagacious biſhop Sherlock,

* Dr. Clarke at Boyle's Lectures, and others.

ſpeaking of the miracles wrought for the conviction of Pharaoh, ſays, " Here the queſtion plainly was " between God under the character of the God of " the Hebrews, and the god of the Egyptians, which " of them was ſupreme *." He afterwards adds *, " When the queſtion is, Who is the mightieſt, muſt " it not be decided in his favour who viſibly exerts " the greateſt acts of power †?" All the Heathen nations

* Diſcourſes, V. 1. p. 281, 285. At p. 279, he had affirmed, " God thought proper to exert himſelf in ſuch acts of " power as ſhould demonſtrate his *ſuperiority* above all gods of " the Heathen." And ſo little did his Lordſhip attend to the hiſtory, that he affirms, after the generality of divines, that the character of diſtinction which God aſſumed, when he commiſſioned Moſes to work miracles, was that of the God of the Hebrews, p. 279, 280; notwithſtanding its being ſo evident, that the diſtinguiſhing character which God then aſſumed was that of *Jehovah*; and that the grand deſign of Moſes's miracles was to prove, that the God of the Hebrews had a right to this title. The miracles of Moſes were indeed in part deſigned to accompliſh the deliverance of the Iſraelites; and in this view they demonſtrated Jehovah to be " the God of the Hebrews:" a character under which God now appeared, though it was not now firſt aſſumed; for he had ſtood before in the ſame relation to their anceſtors. But had he appeared under no other or higher character than this; he would have been confounded with the ſeveral local deities of the Heathens. Whenever he was thus degraded as only the tutelary god of Iſrael; (as he was by Rabſhakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 33, 34;) he vindicated his own proper character as Jehovah God, and ſole monarch of the univerſe. 2 Kings xix. 14—35.

† That in the caſe of a conteſt, he who performs the *moſt* and *greateſt* miracles, gives evidence only of *ſuperior* power, not

nations had at that time their ſeveral local deities, whoſe reſpective claims did not interfere with one another; each deity having a particular province and people of his own. Hence it came to paſs, that the god peculiar to each nation, never had his divinity called in queſtion within his own diſtrict by the other nations. So that had Jehovah appeared under no higher character, than that of the God of the Hebrews; the Heathens might and would have readily admitted it, without departing from their own principles. But the God of Iſrael aſſuming the title of Jehovah, and declaring this to be his diſtinguiſhing name and memorial, by which he would always be remembered and celebrated * ; his claims were abſolutely ſubverſive of thoſe of all other gods. It was the fundamental article of the Jewiſh religion, that their God was Jehovah, and God alone; and that all the Heathen deities had no power or influence over the affairs of mankind, within any limits whatſoever. And therefore the queſtion never could be, Who is the *mightieſt*, Jehovah or the rival gods of Paganiſm. Any ſigns of power given by the latter, would have overthrown the doctrine of Jehovah's prophets, and infringed his prerogative as the ſole author and ſovereign of nature. If he was Jehovah,

not of *abſolute ſupremacy*; was ſhewn above, ch. 2. ſect. 6. p. 83. And how unſatisfactory the biſhop's ſolution is, when applied to the works of the magicians in Egypt, will be ſhewn below, ch. 4. ſect. 1.

* Exod. iii. 15.

there could be no other ſovereign of nature: and if there was any other ſovereign of nature, he was not Jehovah, or the only living and true God. Accordingly we find in fact, that in the conteſt between the Iſraelites and Egyptians, and in every ſucceeding conteſt, the queſtion was, Is the God of Iſrael Jehovah, in the full and proper ſenſe of that expreſſion? In this there was another queſtion involved, Are any of the reputed gods of the Heathens truly Gods? or do they poſſeſs any of that power and dominion aſcribed to them by their worſhippers? And how was this queſtion to be decided, but by miracles? A power and dominion over nature cannot be more effectually eſtabliſhed, than by changing or ſuſpending the courſe of its operations. Accordingly Pharaoh demanded of Moſes a ſign *, as a proof of his miſſion from Jehovah. And in the grand conteſt between Elijah and the prophets of Baal; as the queſtion was, Who is God, Jehovah or Baal; ſo both ſides agreed to have it determined by a ſingle miracle. Elijah had no conception, that Jehovah and Baal could both of them be gods, one of them greater than the other. On the contrary, he ſuppoſes one of them only could be God, or have any dominion over nature, or power of working a miracle, and conſequently a title to worſhip; when he ſays, "If Jehovah be God, fol-" low him: but if Baal, follow him †." The propoſal he afterwards made of deciding the controver-

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* Exod. vii. 9.

† 1 Kings xviii. 21.

ſy by a ſingle miracle, (not by the greater in number or degree,) "The God that anſwereth by fire, let him be God," whether Baal or Jehovah *; is a demonſtration that Elijah had no expectation that both Baal and Jehovah could interpoſe in this miraculous manner; becauſe this would rather have proved both of them to be gods, than that Jehovah alone was God; which was the point to be decided. And had Baal anſwered by fire, this point had been determined againſt Elijah, and he muſt have acknowledged that Baal was god; anſwering by fire, being, in his opinion, a valid proof of a divine interpoſition; the very touchſtone by which he himſelf had deſired the claims both of Jehovah and Baal might be tried, in order effectually to diſtinguiſh which were genuine, and which were counterfeit. Elijah allowed the prieſts of Baal to make the experiment firſt, and to try to engage him to anſwer them by fire; firmly aſſured of his utter impotence, and deſirous of expoſing him in the preſence of his deluded worſhippers. All application to Baal being ineffectual, Elijah prayed for fire from heaven, not to manifeſt the *ſuperiority* of the God of Iſrael, but his ſole Divinity, "that "it might be known that Jehovah was God in Iſ- "rael, and Jehovah God †." When the fire of Jehovah fell and conſumed the ſacrifice, the people acknowledged, "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God ‡." This concluſion was juſt, upon the princi-

* V. 24.

† 1 Kings xviii. 36, 37. ‡ V. 39.

ple maintained above ‖, that the laws of nature being ordained by God, their operation and effects cannot be controuled by any ſuperior beings beſides him. If this principle be falſe, could a ſingle miracle confute the claims of the Heathen deities, and demonſtrate Jehovah to be the only ſovereign of nature? But it is, I hope, needleſs to ſhew, that revelation confirms the dictates of reaſon on this ſubject. Here we have no other view, than to illuſtrate the ſtate of the ancient controverſy between the prophets of God and idolaters; and by that means to confirm what has been already urged to ſhew, that the Scriptures repreſent all miracles as the prerogatives of the one eternal Divinity, and as proofs of his being Jehovah, and God alone. They do this in a manner, that plainly ſhews their having no apprehenſion, that any ſuperior beings whatever, beſides God, had a power of producing theſe effects.

‖ Ch. 2. ſect. 3.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

The Scriptures uniformly repreſent all miracles as being, in themſelves, an abſolute demonſtration of the divinity of the miſſion and doctrine of the prophets, at whoſe inſtance they are performed; and never direct us to regard their doctrines as a teſt of the miracles being the effect of a divine interpoſition.

WHEN God commiſſioned Moſes to deliver the Iſraelites out of Egypt; he at the ſame enabled him to perform ſigns and wonders, to procure him credit both with the Iſraelites *, and the Egyptians †. Miracles were the only teſtimonials urged with either, in proof of his miſſion from Jehovah. And it was alſo upon this evidence alone, that the laws of Moſes were afterwards received by the Iſraelites as divine injunctions ‡, and his authority ſupported amongſt them; though they were too much diſpoſed to diſobey the one, and murmur againſt the other ||. They did not however try his miracles by his

* Exod. iv. 1—5, 8, 9. See alſo Numb. xvi. 28—30. Deut. iv. 39.

† Exod. vii. 8.

‡ Exod. xix. 3—8. ch. xxiv. 3.

|| When the Iſraelites charged Moſes with ambition and uſurpation, he appeals to a miracle in proof of his divine commiſſion, Numb. xvi. 13, 28, 29, " Hereby ye ſhall know that " the Lord has ſent me.—If the Lord make a new thing, and the

his laws; nor diſpute the divine original of the former, merely becauſe many of the latter were expenſive and painful, and had no intrinſic excellence to recommend them. Nor did Moſes, when he proved by miracles his commiſſion to require of Pharaoh the releaſe of the Iſraelites, appeal to the equity of his demand, in confirmation of the divinity of his works; though he might have ſhewn, that the bondage of the Iſraelites was the higheſt reproach to the gratitude of the Egyptians, whoſe country had been ſaved by Joſeph, and a violation of all the laws of hoſpitality, and of all the promiſes of protection and kindneſs made to the Iſraelites, when they firſt came into Egypt. But Moſes reſted the proof of his authority upon the ſole evidence of his works, as plainly diſcovering the hand of God. The ſucceeding prophets* under the Old Teſtament, proceeded upon the ſame principle; and appealed to miracles alone, as an unqueſtionable demonſtration of their miſſion from God. Elijah in particular thus prays to God to anſwer him by fire, "Let it be known this day, that thou art "God in Iſrael, and that I am thy ſervant, and that "I

"the earth open her mouth," &c. It was by a miracle likewiſe that Samuel convinced the Iſraelites of their fault in aſking a king, 1 Sam. xii. 16—19.

* Joſh. iii. 7. ch. iv. 14. 1 Sam. x. 1—7. ch. xii. 16—18. 1 Kings xiii. 3. ch. xvii. 24. 2 Kings v. 15. In like manner with regard to prophecies, by their accompliſhment it ſhall be known that a prophet has been amongſt them, Ezek. xxxiii. 33. Jer. xxviii. 9. 1 Sam. iii. 19, 20. compare Deut. xviii. 22.

" I have done all theſe things at thy word *." The very ſame uſe is made of the miracles of the New Teſtament. But this being a point which has been controverted both by the adverſaries and advocates of the Chriſtrian revelation; (the former ſometimes denying, that the miracles of the Goſpel were deſigned to atteſt Chriſt's divine miſſion; and the latter often aſſerting, that they are urged only as conditional atteſtations of it;) I will examine diſtinctly the paſſages which ſpeak of the author and end of the Goſpel miracles; eſpecially as I do not remember to have ſeen them collected together, much leſs placed in (what appears to me to be) their true light. The miracles of Chriſt, and his apoſtles ſhall be conſidered ſeparately.

I.

With regard to our Saviour; juſt before he entered upon his public miniſtry, he was qualified for the diſcharge of it, by receiving " the Spirit of God without meaſure †," or for univerſal and perpetual uſe, and not as the former prophets had received it, for a limited time and occaſion. Accordingly he refers both his doctrine and his works to God as their author. " He ſpake as the Father taught him, and gave him commandment ‡." His miracles he ſtyles " the

* 1 Kings xviii. 36.

† John iii. 34.

‡ John viii. 28. ch. xii. 49, 50. In farther proof of his referring his doctrine to God, the following paſſages might be appealed

" the works of God," and " the works of his Father *;" which would have been an improper mode of expreſſion, if any one elſe could have done the ſame works. Chriſt expreſsly aſcribes them to " the finger or Spirit of God †;" and affirms on one occaſion, " The Son can do nothing of himſelf ‡;" and on another, " The words that I ſpeak unto you, " I ſpeak not of myſelf. But the Father that dwell- " eth in me, he doth the works ‖," whereby thoſe words are confirmed. He repreſents them as a viſible and very conſpicuous diſplay of the " glory § and power † of God." His diſciples, in like manner,

appealed to, ch. viii. 26, 38, 40. ch. vii. 16, 17. ch. xiv. 10, 24. Agreeably hereto we are told, " that the Spirit of the Lord " was upon him, anointing him to preach the Goſpel," Luke iv, 18, and that after his reſurrection " he through the Holy " Ghoſt gave commandments unto his apoſtles," Acts i. 2. See Whitby's preface to St. John's Goſpel.

* John ix. 3. ch. x. 37. ch. v. 36.

† Mat. xii. 28. Luke xi. 20.

‡ John v. 19.

‖ John xiv. 10.

§ Ch. xi. 4. In the 40th verſe Chriſt, when going to raiſe Lazarus, thus addreſſes Martha, " Said I not unto thee, that " if thou wouldſt believe, thou ſhouldſt ſee the glory of " God?"

† " To whom hath THE ARM OF THE LORD been revealed?" John xii. 37, 38. It is with a peculiar reference to the miracles of Chriſt, that he frequently affirms, " that ſeeing him," was

ſpeak of them as works, " which God did by him * ;" and declare, " God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with " the Holy Ghoſt and with power, who went about " doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed " with the devil, for God was with him †."

Agreeably to this repreſentation of their author, Chriſt appeals to his miracles as a demonſtration (not a partial and conditional, but a compleat and abſolute demonſtration) of his miſſion from God. He tells the Jews, " The works which my Father has " given me to finiſh (or to perform) the ſame works " that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father has " ſent me." He adds, " Even the Father himſelf " which hath ſent me, hath born witneſs of me ‡.". Juſt as he was going to perform one particular miracle, he made a public appeal to God, " that men" (by that ſingle miracle) " might believe that the Father had ſent him ‖." And St. Peter ſtyles him, " a " man approved of God, (or conſpicuouſly demon- " ſtrated by God § to be his meſſenger) by miracles, " and

was " ſeeing God who ſent him." John xii. 44, 45. ch. xiv. 9—12. ch. xv. 24.

* Acts ii. 22.

† Ch. x. 33. St. Luke alſo ſays, ch. iv. 1, 14. " Jeſus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," which is explained Mat. iv. 23, 24, " He healed all manner of diſeaſes."

‡ John v. 36, 37. See alſo ch. viii. 18, 28, 29, 42, 54. ch. x. 35, 36.

‖ Ch. xi. 41, 42.

§ Ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποδεδειγμένον. Acts ii. 22.

" and wonders, and ſigns." This language of Chriſt and his apoſtles implies, that his miracles were works appropriate to the Father, and therefore, in themſelves, and apart from all conſideration of his doctrine, a full demonſtration of his divine miſſion.

The miracles of Chriſt were farther deſigned to evince his peculiar character as *the Meſſiah* or *anointed*. But here it will be neceſſary previouſly to conſider, what is included in this character: a point which has been overlooked * by our beſt writers upon the ſubject of miracles; and the overlooking of which has, I apprehend, been one cauſe of their not diſcerning the peculiar and direct deſign of the New Teſtament miracles, or at leaſt occaſioned their ſpeaking of it in too vague and indeterminate a manner. The kings of Iſrael (thoſe vice-roys of God, who ſat upon God's throne,) were inſtalled in their office, by the ceremony of anointing them with oil, and very frequently diſtinguiſhed by this title †, " the Lord's anointed." When this term is applied to Chriſt, it conveys to us the idea of " a king, immediately ap-
" pointed by God, and qualified for that office by a
" divine

* I take notice of this overſight, not merely for the ſake of ſhewing the neceſſity of here laying before the reader, a fuller account of the ends propoſed by the Goſpel miracles, than any that has been given by former writers; but alſo of ſhewing in general, how neceſſary it is to examine every thing ourſelves, without truſting to the repreſentation even of learned, judicious, and candid men.

† This title was not indeed peculiar to the kings of Iſrael; but it belonged to them eminently.

"divine unction," the unlimited communication, and perpetual reſidence of the Holy Ghoſt. The two grand branches of Chriſt's regal office are "legiſlation," and "the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments amongſt his ſubjects," according to their different behaviour. In ancient times kings were alſo *judges* *; and indeed the adminiſtration of juſtice is a principal act of government, and inſeparable from the office of ſovereign princes. An authority to diſpenſe pardon, is likewiſe an eſſential branch of the royal prerogative, and ſuch as it was neceſſary the ſovereign of mankind ſhould be inveſted with, in order to his encouraging his ſubjects, who were in a ſtate of guilt and revolt from God, to return to their allegiance †. And the kingdom of Chriſt not being of a temporal nature, but ſpiritual and heavenly, and the chief bleſſings of it being ſuch as could not be enjoyed in their proper extent in this world, or even in

* "Be wiſe now therefore, O ye kings: be inſtructed ye judges of the earth." Pſ. ii. 10. compare 1 Sam. viii. 5, 7. Our Saviour declares, that a *judicial* power belongs to him as the Meſſiah, "The Father has given him authority to execute judgment alſo, becauſe he is the ſon of man," John v. 27. He ſpeaks of himſelf under the character of *a king*, when he deſcribes his coming to judge the world, Mat. xxv. 34. And St. Paul calls his appearance as the judge of the living and the dead, *his kingdom*, 2 Tim. iv. 1. See Acts x. 42.

† Acts vi. 31. ch. x. 43. It is obſerved in Livy, Dec. 1. l. 2. c. 3, that what renders *the kingly government* dear to the people, is the liberty of pardoning; Regem hominem eſſe, a quo impetres, ubi jus, ubi injuria opus ſit: eſſe gratiæ locum, eſſe beneficio; & iraſci & ignoſcere poſſe.

in the future ſtate while mankind continued under the power of death; it was abſolutely neceſſary, that Chriſt ſhould be authorized by God to raiſe the dead, in order to their being judged, and either rewarded or condemned *. All the other exerciſes of his royal power, are only ſo many preparations for the laſt grand act, of inſtating all the children of God in a bleſſed immortality. The notion we are to form of Jeſus as the Meſſiah, is that of the (promiſed and) divinely conſtituted *prince* and *Saviour* †. In his *legiſlative* and *judicial* capacity, he is ſpoken of as *a king*: and when he exerciſes his power in diſpenſing divine pardon, in recovering mankind from the dominion of death, and putting the righteous of every age and nation into the poſſeſſion of eternal life, he is deſcribed as a *Saviour*. But, ſtrictly ſpeaking, this latter office is included in the former. Chriſt's royalty would have been but an empty title, without the power of diſtributing rewards and puniſhments, to inforce the obedience of his ſubjects. In a word, the Meſſiahſhip of Jeſus denotes his *regal* commiſſion and power, or his right by divine deſignation to dominion and judicature over mankind. And this is what the miracles of Chriſt were deſigned to eſtabliſh.

At the firſt opening of his miniſtry, he proclaimed the joyful tidings of the approach or arrival of the Meſſiah, or of the kingdom of heaven; aſſerted his own authority to give laws, and to adminiſter government

* See John v. 27—29.

† Acts v. 31.

ment in this kingdom of God; and at the ſame time urged his miracles as a full and adequate proof of his regal inveſtiture and commiſſion. In oppoſition to thoſe who accuſed him of a confederacy with Satan, he affirms, "If I caſt out demons by the Spi-"rit of God, then is the kingdom of God come "unto you*:" which implied, that he himſelf was the perſon, under whom that kingdom was to be erected. To thoſe who deſired him, in caſe he was the Chriſt, plainly to declare it, he replied, "I told "you who I am, and ye believed not. The works "that I do in my Father's name, they bear wit-"neſs of me.——Say ye of him, whom the Father "has ſanctified" (or ſet apart to the office of the Meſſiah) "and ſent into the world" (under ſo high a character), "Thou blaſphemeſt; becauſe I ſaid, "I am the Son of God†? If I do not the works of "my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though "ye believe not me," i. e. my teſtimony, "BELIEVE "THE WORKS," which are the teſtimony of God: "that" by theſe viſible diſplays of his power and authority, "ye may know and believe, that the Father "is in me, and I in him‡." To his diſciples he ſpeaks the ſame language, "Believe me that I am "in the Father, and the Father in me: or elſe be-

R "lieve

* Mat. xii. 28. Luke xi. 20.

† *The Son of God*, and *the Meſſiah* or *the Chriſt*, are equivalent terms. Mat. xvi. 16. John. vi. 69. Mat. xxvi. 63. Luke xxii. 66, 70. John i. 34—41. Compare Prov. iv. 3. Pſ. ii. 7, 12. 2 Sam. vii. 14.

‡ John x. 24, 25, 36—38. ch. viii. 28, 29.

" lieve me FOR THE VERY WORKS SAKE *:" which are the moſt authentic teſtimonials of my union with the Father, and of his dwelling and operating in me by a permanent influence; ſo that, properly, it is God who ſpeaks and acts by me. In anſwer to that inquiry, by a deputation to Jeſus from the Baptiſt, " Art thou He that ſhould come?" he refers them to his miracles for ſatisfaction ‡. And becauſe his miracles evinced his dignity and authority as the Meſſiah, he affirms their intention to be, " that the " Son of God might be glorified thereby ‖." His divine commiſſion and prerogative to diſpenſe ſpiritual bleſſings, is particularly pointed out, as a moſt eſſential branch of his office, and at the ſame time moſt remote from the conception of the worldly-minded Jews. When he healed the maladies of thoſe, who, from a principle of faith, applied to him, he declared he did it with this view, " that men " might know, that the Son of man had power on " earth to forgive ſins §." And to the end, they might regard him as the diſpenſer of eternal life to good

* Ch. xiv. 10, 11.

‡ " The blind receive their ſight, the lame walk," &c. Mat. xi. 5. Luke vii. 21.

‖ John xi. 4. By his firſt miracle, " he manifeſted forth his glory." John ii. 11.

§ Mark ii. 10, 11. Chriſt's reaſoning here ſuppoſes, that the power of healing diſeaſes was no leſs the prerogative of God, than that of pardoning ſins; and therefore that neither could be communicated to any, but by God alone.

good men, after having raiſed them from the dead; before he called Lazarus from the grave, he ſtiles himſelf "the reſurrection and the life," and aſſured his diſciples, "he that believes on me, though he "were dead, yet ſhall he live *." The power of reſtoring the dead to life, he elſewhere ſpeaks of as the immediate gift of his Father: and then proceeds to aſſert his power to call all mankind from their graves, that they might be adjudged to everlaſting life or death †. And inaſmuch as all his miracles, by proving him to be the Meſſiah, eſtabliſhed his commiſſion from God to raiſe the dead, (without which he could neither judge his ſubjects, nor beſtow upon them the promiſed recompence); we find him upon all occaſions, and particularly when he fed five thouſand with a few loaves and fiſhes, aſſerting his character as the diſpenſer of eternal life ‡; adding, "for him "has God the Father ſealed," his miracles being as authentic credentials of his Meſſiahſhip, as the royal ſeal is of a commiſſion from a prince, whoſe ſeal it is: which expreſſion ſtrongly implies, that miracles are a ſeal which none but God can uſe. If impoſtors are allowed to perform them, they are no authentic proof of a divine miſſion, any more than the royal ſeal would be of an order from a prince, who permitted others, and even his enemies, to have a

 duplicate

* John xi. 25, 26.

† Ch. v. 20, 21, 25, 29. See ch. vi. 39, 40, 44, 45.

‡ "The Son of man ſhall give unto you eternal life." John vi. 27.

duplicate or counterpart of the ſame. In a word, all Chriſt's miracles were performed, (and all his prophecies * likewiſe were delivered,) with exactly the ſame view with which they were committed to writing, "that we might believe, that Jeſus is the "Chriſt, the Son of God; and that believing we "might have life through his name †." The *effect* they produced was anſwerable to this deſign of their performance. They carried along with them a conviction of their divinity: "No man," ſaid Nicodemus to our Saviour, "can do theſe miracles that "thou doſt, except God be with him ‡." And "the "multitude," when they ſaw his works, "marvelled, and glorified God, who had given ſuch power "unto men ‖." Accordingly his miracles wrought a perſuaſion in ſome, that Jeſus was a divine prophet §; and in others, that he was the Meſſiah §. If miracles were not concluſive, and even cogent arguments of a divine miſſion, the reſiſtance of theſe means of conviction would not have been upbraided by

* "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come "to paſs, ye may believe that I am he." John xiii. 19. See ch. ii. 22. ch. xiv. 29. ch. xvi. 4, 30. 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Rev. xix. 10.

† John xx. 31. See ch. xi. 15.

‡ John iii. 2.

‖ Mat. ix. 8. See John ix. 33.

§ Mat. xii. 23. John ii. 11, 22, 23. ch. iii. 2. ch. iv. 45, 52, 53. ch. vi. 14. ch. vii. 31. ch. ix. 35—38. ch. x. 42. ch. xi. 45, 47, 48. ch. xii. 11. Luke xxiv. 19.

by Chriſt with ſo much ſeverity, nor made a ground of the moſt aggravated condemnation *. On the other hand, Chriſt declares, "If I had not done "amongſt them the works which none other man "did," (that is, ſuch as none but a truly divine meſſenger can perform,) "they had not had ſin: "but now have they both ſeen, and hated both me "and my Father †."

* Mat. x. 15. ch. xi. 20—24. ch. xii. 31. John xii. 37. ch. xv. 22—25. Heb. ii. 3, 4. ch. vi. 4. God proceeded to execute judgment upon Pharaoh, upon his not yielding to the evidence of the firſt miracle; and Zacharias was ſtruck dumb, for not giving credit to a ſingle divine appearance: which ſeems to imply, that every miracle bears upon it the viſible ſtamp of divinity. And wherein does the common doctrine concerning miracles being wrought by evil ſpirits, differ from "the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt," (ſo ſeverely condemned in thoſe who imputed Chriſt's cure of demoniacs to the aſſiſtance of demons,) except in its not arguing malice againſt Chriſt? The Jews referred only one ſpecies of Chriſt's miracles to the devil: many Chriſtians aſſert, that moſt, if not all, his miracles might be wrought by evil ſpirits.

† John xv. 24. This paſſage has been generally thought to affirm, that the perſonal miracles of Chriſt were *greater* than thoſe of Moſes, or any of the ancient prophets; which was ſcarce true at that time. Chriſt is here diſtinguiſhing himſelf from all *falſe* prophets, whom the Jews were too much inclined to follow, even without any evidence of their miſſion, and from a mere reliſh of their corrupt doctrine. The expreſſion is ſomewhat parallel to John x. 37. "If I do not the "works of my Father, believe me not." Both theſe paſſages teach us in the ſtrongeſt manner, that miracles are works which no impoſtor, nor any but God, can perform, and in themſelves authentic proofs of a divine miſſion.

On the third day after he had suffered death, under the false imputation of blasphemy and imposture; he was raised from the dead: a miracle which the Scripture ascribes "to the working of God's mighty power *," and considers as the capital and most authentic declaration of Jesus's being "the Son of God †," and the true Messiah; and to which he had often referred his enemies for conviction ‡. The regal power of the Messiah, including in it a judicial as well as a legislative authority; the resurrection of Christ, and his advancement to the full possession of his regal power, is spoken of as a completion of the evidence, and as a commanding argument of his being appointed to judge the world ||.

II.

With regard to the miracles performed by the apostles of Christ, after his ascension into heaven; as they are ascribed to the agency of the Spirit of God §, even to "the Spirit of truth which proceedeth (cometh forth) from the Father ¶," and is dispensed through the

* Ephes. i. 19. Col. ii. 12.

† Rom. i. 4.

‡ John ii. 18. Mat. xii. 38. ch. xvi. 1.

|| Acts xvii. 31. In this passage, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν, "having offered faith to all men;" faith is put for the *evidence* afforded, or the *persuasive argument* whereby it is wrought.

§ Rom. xv. 19. 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. Heb. ii. 4.

¶ John xv. 26.

the mediation of Chriſt *; ſo they are urged as a full vindication of the character of Chriſt from the aſperſions and calumnies of his enemies, as a proof of the truth of his reſurrection and advancement to celeſtial dignity and power, as a confirmation of his claims to be a divine meſſenger and the Son of God, as a teſtimony of God and of Chriſt to thoſe whom he commiſſioned to aſſert theſe claims, or to atteſt the facts (his reſurrection in particular) on which they were founded †; or in other words, as an indubitable divine teſtimony to the doctrine they preached, when they taught Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, by faith in whom pardon and eternal life were to be obtained. Our Saviour promiſed his followers, "that they ſhould do greater works "than he had done, becauſe he went to the Father," (or was to be exalted to power in his preſence and kingdom,) when, as the effect and evidence of his exaltation, he was to receive from the Father, and diſpenſe to his followers, the Holy Ghoſt ‡. "And "when he is come, he will" (by the miracles he will enable you to perform in my name) "reprove"

* Tit. iii. 6. "The Father," ſays our Lord, "will ſend "him in my name. I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give "you another Comforter or Advocate. I will ſend him unto "you from the Father." John xiv. 26. ch. xv. 26.

† The apoſtles received their commiſſion from Chriſt; John xx. 31. ch. xvii. 18. and were appointed to be the witneſſes of his reſurrection; ch. xv. 27. Acts i. 8. ch. ii. 22, 23. ch. x. 39, 41. ch. xiii. 31. 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15.

‡ John xiv. 12. ch. xv. 26. Acts ii. 33—36.

(or rather, convince) "the world of ſin," of their heinous guilt in rejecting and condemning me to death as an impoſtor, "and of" the "righteouſneſs" of my character and the juſtice of my claims, "and of" the equity of that "judgment," which will be executed upon my enemies *. "He ſhall teſtify of "me †. He ſhall glorify me ‡. At that day," ſays Chriſt, "ye ſhall know, that I am in my Father, and "you in me, and I in you ||." He intercedes with his Father, on the behalf both of his apoſtles, and of their converts, "that they may be one," (by a common participation of the Spirit,) "as § thou, Father, art "in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one "in us: that the world" (by the viſible operations of that Spirit, which I ſhall receive from thee, and impart to them,) "may believe that thou haſt ſent "me." And "the glory" (the power and honour of performing miracles by the Spirit) "which thou "haſt given me, I have given them: that they may "be one, even as we are one; that the world may "know that thou haſt ſent me, and haſt loved them, "as thou haſt loved me." And juſt before his aſcenſion

* John xvi. 8—11.

† Ch. xv. 26.

‡ Ch. xvi. 14.

|| Ch. xiv. 20. ch. xvii. 21—23. Compare ch. x. 38. ch. xiv. 10, 11, cited above; and conſult Dr. Whitby on theſe ſeveral places, and on Epheſ. iv. 4.

§ John. xvii. 21—23. *As*, in this place, denotes *reſemblance*, not *equality: for in Chriſt dwells all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily.*

cenſion he tells his diſciples, " Ye ſhall receive power " after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you; and " ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me *."

Conformable to this declared intention of Chriſt in promiſing and beſtowing the gifts and miracles of the Holy Ghoſt, are the ſeveral uſes to which they are applied by the apoſtles. When they received the gift of tongues, St. Peter tells the Jews, " Chriſt be- " ing by the right hand of God exalted, and having " received of the Father the promiſe of the Holy " Ghoſt, he has ſhed forth this, which ye now ſee " and hear †." And from this effuſion of the Spirit, as well as from the teſtimony of prophecy, he argues, " that God had made Jeſus both Lord and Chriſt †." " We," ſays the ſame apoſtle afterwards, " are wit- " neſſes of theſe things," (viz. the reſurrection and exaltation of Jeſus,) " and ſo alſo is the Holy " Ghoſt ‡." The Scriptures likewiſe inform us on other occaſions, that " with great power" (by very illuſtrious miracles) " gave the apoſtles witneſs of " the reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus ||." The *manner* in which the apoſtles performed their miracles, ſhews that they were eſpecially deſigned as an immediate teſtimony to the reſurrection and glory of Chriſt. " In the name of Jeſus of Nazareth riſe up and " walk §," ſaid Peter to the lame man at the gate of the

* Acts i. 8.

† Ch. ii. 33—36.

‡ Acts v. 31, 32.

|| Ch. iv. 30, 33.

§ Ch. iii. 6. Compare ch. iv. 30.

the temple. And he thus farther explains the intention of the miracle to the aſtoniſhed multitude: "God "has raiſed up, and glorified his Son Jeſus; and his "name, (or power,) through faith in his name, has "made this man ſtrong." The apoſtles conſtantly declared themſelves to be the appointed witneſſes of his reſurrection and exaltation; and accordingly their miracles are ſpoken of as the atteſtation of God to them, in the execution of their commiſſion. "God "bore them witneſs, both by ſigns and wonders, "and with divers miracles and gifts (or diſtribu-"tions) of the Holy Ghoſt *: they went forth, and "preached every where; the Lord working with "them, and confirming the word with ſigns follow-"ing †: the Lord gave teſtimony to the word of his "grace, and granted ſigns and wonders to be done "by their hands ‡." St. Paul, in particular, conſidered ſupernatural interpoſitions in his favour, as manifeſtations of "the life ||" of Chriſt, "and as a proof of

* Heb. ii. 4.

† Mark xvi. 20.

‡ Acts xiv. 3. By "the word, the word of God, the Goſ-"pel, the word of the Goſpel, the word of the kingdom," (which are often uſed as ſynonimous terms,) the Scripture means the joyful news of the approach or arrival of the Meſſiah, and the preaching Jeſus to be that very perſon, or the ruler and redeemer of the people of God. Compare Luke iii. 18, 21. ch. viii. 11. ch. ix. 2, 6. Mat. xi. 5. Acts viii. 4. ch. x. 36, 37. ch. xi. 1, 19, 20. ch. xii. 24. ch. xiii. 42—49. ch. xv. 7, 35. ch. xvii. 3, 11, 13. ch. xviii. 4, 11.

|| 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.

of Chriſt ſpeaking in him *," and expreſsly calls his miracles, " the ſigns of an apoſtle †." He likewiſe tells his converts, " that his Goſpel came not unto " them in word only, but alſo in power, and in the " Holy Ghoſt, and in much aſſurance," (or with the fulleſt conviction of its truth); " and that his preach- " ing was in demonſtration of the Spirit, and of " power, that their faith might not ſtand in the wiſ- " dom of men, but in the power of God ‡." The *effect* produced by theſe miracles, correſponds to and confirms the account here given of their primary declared intention: for they demanded and procured an abſolute credit to the doctrine and teſtimony of the performers, " concerning the kingdom of God ||, " and the name of Jeſus Chriſt §." And St. Paul tells us, that the Gentiles were made obedient to the faith, " through mighty ſigns and wonders, by the " power of the Spirit of God," and preſented as an acceptable offering to God, " being ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt ¶," imparted to the firſt Chriſtian converts in many extraordinary gifts.

The

* Ch. xiii. 3.

† Ch. xii. 12. Compare 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20. and what is urged above, ch. 3. ſect. 4. p. 213, 214.

‡ 1 Theſſ. i. 5. 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

|| See above, note ‡, p. 266.

§ Acts viii. 6, 7. See ch. ii. 33, 41—43. ch. ix. 35, 42. ch. xiii. 12. Rom. xv. 18.

¶ Rom. xv. 16, 18, 19. It appears from this paſſage, that the winning men over to the faith of Chriſt, was the deſign with

The paſſages already cited, chiefly refer to the miracles performed by the apoſtles, for the conviction of unbelievers: I will now ſet down the paſſages which expreſs the intention of thoſe ſpiritual gifts which the apoſtles beſtowed upon believers; that we may ſee the whole ſubject in one view. The gifts conferred upon the Chriſtian converts, beſides being a new confirmation of the Chriſtian faith, or of the doctrine and teſtimony of the apoſtles concerning Chriſt *; were farther deſigned as an evidence of the divine favour to all who received and obeyed the Goſpel, though they did not ſubmit to the law of Moſes; as a ſeal of the pardon of their paſt ſins, and a pledge of their adoption to eternal life †; as a proof of their election of God to be his church and people ‡; and as a means alſo of ſupporting the worſhip of God, and thereby of promoting the edification and improvement of Chriſtians, as well as the conviction of unbelievers, who might caſually attend the Chriſtian aſſemblies ‖. With regard to the miraculous judgments inflicted upon ſuch as wickedly oppoſed, corrupted, or diſobeyed the Goſpel; they were deſigned more immediately for the puniſhment and reformation

with which the miracles were performed, as well as the effect which they produced.

* 1 Cor. i. 5, 6, 7. 2 Cor. i. 18—22.

† Acts ii. 38. Rom. v. 1, 5. ch. viii. 14—16. 23. 2 Cor. i. 22. ch. v. 5. Gal. iv. 6, 7. Epheſ. i. 13, 14. ch. iv. 30. Compare Luke xx. 36.

‡ 1 Theſſ. i. 4, 5.

‖ 1 Cor. xii. 7. ch. xiv. 3, 22, 25, 31. Epheſ. iv. 8—16.

tion of offenders *, though they ultimately terminated in the confirmation of the Chriſtian doctrine.

The clear and explicit view, which the foregoing paſſages of Scripture give us of the preciſe intention of the miracles of the New Teſtament, may ſerve to rectify the miſtakes men have run into upon this ſubject. In the numerous paſſages here cited, the divinity of theſe miracles, conſidered in themſelves, is always either expreſsly aſſerted, or manifeſtly implied; and they are accordingly urged as a deciſive and abſolute proof of the divinity of the doctrine and teſtimony of their performers, without ever taking into conſideration the nature of the doctrine or of the teſtimony to be confirmed.

To what is here advanced, ſome will object, "that "our Saviour, when the Phariſees aſcribed his mi- "racles to a confederacy with demons, appealed to "his doctrine in refutation of the calumny:" "If "Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided againſt him- "ſelf; how then ſhall his kingdom ſtand? And if "I by Beelzebub caſt out devils; by whom do your "children caſt them out? therefore they ſhall be "your judges †." It is ſuppoſed that our Saviour in this paſſage affirms, that it was abſurd to aſcribe his miracles to the devil, becauſe *his doctrine* was moſt oppoſite to all that an evil ſpirit could wiſh to be propagated in the world; and that if Chriſt was an accomplice

* 1 Tim. i. 20. Acts xiii. 11. 2 Cor. x. 6. 1 Cor. v. 5. 2 Cor. xiii. 10.

† Mat. xii. 26, 27.

complice of the devil, then the devil was ſubverting his own intereſts, ruining his own kingdom. This objection, I apprehend, proceeds upon two miſtakes.

1ſt, It ſuppoſes, that the Phariſees aſcribed the miracles of Chriſt *in general* to a confederacy with demons: a ſuppoſition altogether groundleſs. It appears from the hiſtory *, that this calumny, as it was occaſioned by, ſo it concerned only, one particular ſpecies of his miracles, the cure of demoniacs; whoſe diſorders were thought to be cauſed by the influence of demons; from whence it was concluded, that they might be removed by the influence of demons. There is no intimation given us, that the enemies of Chriſt ever extended this reproach to any of his other miracles; faithfully as the evangeliſts have recorded every other calumny againſt him, and particular as they have been in their relation of this. And indeed it is certain, that the Phariſees neither did nor could aſcribe the miracles of Chriſt in general to a demoniacal agency. They *could not* do it; I mean, not without groſs ſelf-contradiction: becauſe they allowed miracles to be a proof of a divine miſſion, upon which alone their religion was founded; and becauſe many of the miracles of Chriſt were the very ſame with thoſe, which their own prophets had produced as divine credentials. And that they *did not* aſcribe them to demons, appears from their behaviour on ſome remarkable occaſions. When they were unable to deny

* The following are the only inſtances of this calumny on record: Mat. ix. 32. ch. xii. 22. Mark iii. 22. Luke xi. 14.

deny the reality of Chriſt's miracles, at a loſs to evade the conviction of them, and fully ſenſible of the dangerous conſequences to their ſuperſtition and uſurpation, from their gaining credit; in a word, when reduced by them to the utmoſt perplexity, even then they did not ſo much as attempt to argue, that the works of Chriſt proceeded from any evil ſpirits *, but rather acknowleged God was the author of them. Thus to the man born blind, on whom Chriſt had beſtowed ſight, they ſay, "Give God the praiſe: "we know that this man is a ſinner †." They were willing to allow, that God might exerciſe his power, and convey his favours by a profligate impoſtor, rather than that any but God could open the eyes of a perſon born blind. In this ſenſe they were underſtood by the man on whom they were performed, with whom they were diſputing; as appears from his reply, "God heareth not ſinners ‡," cannot confirm by miracles falſe pretences to a divine commiſſion. It has, I think, been univerſally affirmed, that the Phariſees aſcribed Chriſt's miracles in general to a confederacy with Satan; though the contrary be ſo very evident. How dangerous is it to adopt any opinion, until it has been ſtrictly and impartially examined?

2dly, The objection we are conſidering farther ſuppoſes, that our Lord in his reply refers the Phariſees to his doctrine for ſatisfaction: whereas there is not

* John xi. 47, 48. ch. xii. 19. Acts iv. 14, 16.

† John ix. 24. ‡ V. 31.

not one word ſaid in relation to that, however oppoſite it was to the intereſts of the devil. As the objection referred only to one particular kind of miracles; ſo does the anſwer, which contains an argument in confutation of the objection drawn from the *miracle itſelf*. Our Lord is here addreſſing himſelf to thoſe, who did not acknowlege, and were unwilling to be convinced of his authority; and therefore argues with them (as he was wont * to do) upon their own principles, in order to ſilence thoſe whom he could not inſtruct †: telling them, "that it was unreaſonable to impute his cure of demoniacs to the aſſiſtance of the prince of demons; ſince, if the miracle conſiſted (as they apprehended, and the objection implied,) in the ejection of demons; it was in its very nature an act of hoſtility againſt them; and Satan could not be ſuppoſed to aſſiſt in overturning his own empire." With the ſame view of expoſing the abſurdity of this calumny, upon their own principles and pretenſions, he adds, "If I by Beelzebub caſt out demons; by whom do your children caſt them out? therefore they ſhall be your judges." By the children of the Phariſees we

* Mat. xi. 12, 13. ch. xxv. 24, 25. Luke xviii. 1—7.

† To the malicious Phariſees, who had been endeavouring to inſnare him, Chriſt propoſes this queſtion, "If David call Chriſt Lord, how is he his Son?" Mat. xxii. 45. not for the ſake of ſolving the difficulty, but to leave his enemies ſpeechleſs. And when they aſked him, "Who gave him his authority?" Mat. xxi. 23; he anſwered this queſtion with another, to ſilence thoſe who would not be convinced.

we are to underſtand their diſciples * and followers, or the Jews who undertook † to caſt out demons in the name of the God of Abraham, but who certainly did not ſucceed in their attempts ‡. And our Lord (without either charging their doctrine with abſurdity,

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* In like manner, by "the ſons of the prophets," we are to underſtand the diſciples of the prophets.

† Acts xiii. 19. That the Jews practiſed exorciſms, farther appears from the teſtimonies of Joſephus, Juſtin Martyr, Irenæus, Theophilus, and Origen, cited by Grotius, Hammond and Whitby on Mat. xii. 27.

‡ See Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 84. To what is urged by this excellent writer to diſcredit the teſtimony of the Fathers to the efficacy of the Jewiſh exorciſms, I would add, that Origen, notwithſtanding his allowing to the Jews in his time the power of caſting out devils, declares, "That the Jews, "ſince the coming of Chriſt, are entirely deſerted, have no "token of the divine preſence amongſt them, have no pro-"phets, no miracles." Contra Celſ. l. 2. p. 62. and l. 7. p. 337. And Juſtin Martyr ſpeaks of the prophetic gifts as transferred from the Jews to the Chriſtians. Dial. Tryph. p. 308, 315. Indeed the Jewiſh exorciſms as deſcribed by their own hiſtorian (Joſeph. Ant. Jud. l. 8. c. 2. § 5.) are too abſurd to be confuted. Accordingly the Jews who had been accuſtomed to the exorciſms of their countrymen, (in which they made uſe of magical ceremonies and natural remedies,) when they ſaw the diſorders imputed to demons perfectly and inſtaneouſly cured by Chriſt, were ſtruck with the higheſt aſtoniſhment. Luke xi. 14. Mark i. 26, 28. ch. v. 20. Luke iv. 36, 37. The ſight was *new*, and the miracle carried an immediate conviction of its divinity, "They were amazed at the mighty power of God." Luke ix. 43. and affirm, "It was never ſo ſeen in Iſrael," Mat. ix. 33. compare Mark ii. 12. The ſeventy diſciples triumphed in their cure of demoniacs, as the

ſurdity, or making any mention of the reaſonableneſs of his own,) reproaches the manifeſt inconſiſtency of their conduct, in imputing his cure of demoniacs to Beelzebub, when they aſcribed to God the pretended ſucceſs of their own exorciſms; and at the ſame time taxes them as perſons of the moſt ſhameleſs diſpoſition, in countenancing the groſſeſt impoſtures, while they reſiſted a miracle ſupported by the cleareſt evidence. In the ſequel of his addreſs to the Phariſees, inſtead of referring them to his doctrine, he urges the miracle itſelf as a full and deciſive proof of his being the Meſſiah *; which it could not be, if it could have been performed by thoſe who oppoſed and blaſphemed his character and claims. And when he adds, that the ejection of demons argued a power (not only oppoſite, but) *ſuperior* † to that of Beelzebub; he ſtill reaſons from the nature of the miracle alone, according to their idea of it. He cloſes his addreſs in the ſame ſtrain: "If "it be a juſt maxim, that he is to be regarded as an "enemy, who only refuſes his aſſiſtance ‡; will you "account me a friend and confederate with Satan, "who directly oppoſe and diſpoſſeſs him?"

As

the moſt wonderful and diſtinguiſhing privilege, Luke x. 17. and the people regarded this miracle as the characteriſtic of the Meſſiah, crying out at the ſight of it, "Is not this the Son of David?" Mat. xii. 23. Nay, the Phariſees themſelves were never ſo far blinded by malice as to oppoſe the Jewiſh exorciſms to Chriſt's cure of demoniacs: a plain proof that the difference between them was too great to admit of any compariſon.

* Mat. xii. 28. † V. 29. ‡ V. 30.

As there is no proof that our Lord ever did, ſo it is utterly impoſſible that our Lord ever ſhould, refer the Jews to his doctrine, in order to convince them of the divinity of his works, or to ſatisfy them that thoſe works were not performed by the aſſiſtance of the devil. For notwithſtanding his miracles, they diſputed his divine miſſion and authority, on account of the apprehended abſurdity and impiety of his doctrine, and his extraordinary character and pretenſions as the Son of God. This was the caſe of thoſe who reproached him with blaſphemy, when he aſſerted his commiſſion to forgive ſin, though at the ſame time he confirmed it by a miracle *; and of thoſe who diſparaged his multiplication of the loaves and fiſhes, becauſe he ſpoke to them of his ſufferings and death †. Indeed the doctrine of his croſs was a ground of general offence both to Jews and Gentiles; and inſtead of giving authority to the miracles of the Goſpel, ſtood in need of their aſſiſtance to procure it a reception. The Phariſees, who (as we have already obſerved) could not but allow the divinity of his works, did nevertheleſs conclude, from his performing them on the *Sabbath-day*, (and thus ſubverting thoſe ſuperſtitions, which they reverenced as the moſt eſſential branches of religion,) that he muſt needs be a wicked impoſtor ‡. And the true reaſon, why our Saviour, during the courſe of his perſonal miniſtry,

* Mark ii. 7.

† John vi. 30, 31, 41, 60, 66.

‡ John ix. 14, 16.

did not more clearly and explicitly reveal ſome parts of his doctrine, was, that the prejudices of the Jews againſt them were too ſtubborn to be overcome by the cleareſt evidence of their divinity *. To have directed them, therefore, to try his miracles by the doctrines they were intended to atteſt, would only have ſo much the more confirmed them in their diſbelief of the Goſpel. Even after the reſurrection of Chriſt, when the Goſpel was propoſed to them by the apoſtles in its fulleſt evidence, and the right of the Gentiles to all the privileges of the Chriſtian church, without ſubmitting to the Jewiſh law, was vindicated by the miraculous donation of the Holy Ghoſt to Cornelius and other uncircumciſed Gentiles; yet circumciſion was ſtill inſiſted upon by many, as a neceſſary term of Chriſtian communion.

It is to little purpoſe therefore to plead, as the advocates of Chriſtianity are apt to do, that the nature of the doctrines which miracles are deſigned to confirm, will ſerve to point out the authors of the works; inaſmuch

* If Chriſt had made his doctrine a teſt of the divinity of his miracles, it would have been neceſſary for him to have revealed his *whole* doctrine, before he required men to receive him as a divine meſſenger on account of his miracles: for how could they judge whether thoſe parts of his doctrine which he had not revealed, were worthy of God or not? Nevertheleſs long after Chriſt had required men to receive him becauſe of his works, he tells his own diſciples, "I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." John xvi. 12. Even at this day, no man, on the principle we here oppoſe, can regard the miracles of Chriſt as divine works, unleſs he be previouſly aſſured, that he perfectly underſtands the whole Chriſtian revelation.

inaſmuch as this can do no ſervice to Chriſtianity. For the divinely authorized teachers of it did not, and conſidering the prejudices of the firſt converts, could not, make this uſe of its doctrines. Had there been any ambiguity in the proof from miracles, it would have been rejected by thoſe to whom it was at firſt propoſed. In latter ages learned men have adventured (ſuch is the preſumption and weakneſs of human reaſon, in many perſons endowed with the largeſt meaſure of it!) to demonſtrate a priori, that it became God to interpoſe for the reformation of the world, juſt at the time, and in the manner related in the Goſpel: and hence they infer the divinity of its miracles, and very often even their truth. But it is certain, that in the age in which the Goſpel was publiſhed, nothing ſeemed more incredible, than its grand doctrine, that Jeſus of Nazareth is the Meſſiah. And Jeſus and his apoſtles won men to the belief of this article, by the evidence of prophecies and miracles, without once appealing to the internal credibility of it, or entering into any metaphyſical reaſonings and diſquiſitions concerning the diſpenſations of providence.

Indeed, ſetting all prejudice aſide, the Meſſiahſhip of Jeſus of Nazareth is a doctrine, which natural reaſon cannot, of itſelf, diſcover to be either true or falſe. It is a doctrine which admits of no other proof, than the teſtimony of prophecies and miracles; and yet can never itſelf ſerve to manifeſt their divine original *. A late celebrated writer ſeems to have been

* See below, ch. 5.

ſenſible of this when he ſaid *, that we are "to diſ-"tinguiſh between the doctrines we prove by mira-"cles, and the doctrines by which we try miracles; "and that they are not the ſame doctrines." With what a number of ſubtle diſtinctions have the learned perplexed the evidence of the Goſpel, ſuch as render it very unfit for being (what it was, by its gracious author, deſigned to be) the religion of the poor and illiterate! If miracles are common to all ſuperior beings; is it evident to an ordinary capacity, that they neceſſarily argue the immediate interpoſition of God, when performed by a perſon who teaches leſſons of morality; though at the ſame time he alleges his miracles, in confirmation of claims and powers quite diſtinct from and ſuperior to that of a teacher of morality, ſuch as his being the Meſſiah and Son of God? Beſides, if the purity of Chriſt's moral precepts be a neceſſary teſt of the divinity of his works, wrought to eſtabliſh his extraordinary pretenſions and character; how comes it to paſs, that neither Chriſt nor his apoſtles have given us any information concerning this matter? As they have no where told us, what thoſe doctrines are, by which we are to try their miracles; if there be ſuch doctrines, are they not chargeable with the moſt criminal omiſſion? an omiſſion, which no human wiſdom or ſagacity can ſupply. Nay, upon the ſole evidence of miracles, they demanded faith in Chriſt as the Meſſiah, *before* they inſtructed men in any other doctrines; and therefore

* Sherlock's Diſc. V. 1. p. 303, 304.

therefore certainly without ſubmitting them to previous examination: which would have been very unreaſonable, if thoſe other doctrines are a neceſſary teſt of the divinity of their miracles.

The plain matter of fact, as it appears to me, is this: they never taught men to try their miracles either by the doctrine they were immediately deſigned to confirm, or by any other: but, on the contrary, taught men to judge of their doctrine by their miracles. The very *purity* of the Chriſtian doctrine, as well as the nature of Chriſt's perſonal claims, rendered this conduct neceſſary. The Jews in general, and the Pagans more eſpecially, were plunged into the deepeſt corruption. The latter were not only idolaters, but worſhipped their gods by acts of uncleanneſs, ſuch as were ſuitable to their apprehended natures. Would not the purity of the Goſpel create in ſuch perſons a prejudice againſt its miracles *? What could engage them, to embrace a doctrine that contradicted every ſentiment and affection of their hearts, but ſuch works as were in themſelves, and according to the genuine ſentiments of nature, certain and evident proofs of a divine interpoſition? Thoſe therefore who endeavour to prove, that miracles alone are not a ſufficient criterion of a divine miſſion; do not attend to the nature of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, nor to the ſtate of the world when it was firſt erected. They likewiſe impeach the conduct of Chriſt and his apoſtles, and labour to deſtroy (though without de-

* See above, ch. 2. ſect. 5. p. 78—80.

ſigning it) the very foundation on which Chriſtianity is built. We have ſhewn in general, that if miracles are ever performed in ſupport of falſehood, they can never afford certain evidence of a divine commiſſion. Leaſt of all, then, can they ſerve to eſtabliſh the divine miſſion and authority of Chriſt; which he requires us to acknowlege upon the account of his miracles, as in themſelves a compleat and ſufficient evidence.

I have now laid before the reader various arguments from revelation, to prove that miracles are the peculiar works of God. Leaving others to judge of the force of thoſe arguments; I ſhall conclude this chapter with obſerving, that what has been advanced in it concerning the author of miracles, ſeems to me to be confirmed by the main doctrines both of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations. As it is the diſtinguiſhing doctrine of the Old Teſtament, that Jehovah is the only true God; ſo it is the diſtinguiſhing doctrine of the New Teſtament, that Jeſus Chriſt is the only mediator between God and man. "Though "there be that are called gods, whether in heaven, "or in earth," whether ſuperior *celeſtial* deities, or inferior *terreſtrial* demons, who are thought to interpoſe in human affairs, and to controul the courſe of events, in a ſupernatural manner: "but to us there "is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things," who is the ſovereign of the whole world; "and one "Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things *," who is

* 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6. 1 Tim. ii. 5.

is the ſole agent between heaven and earth, by whoſe miniſtry God exerciſes his government over mankind. But if there are any other ſuperior beings who can of themſelves interpoſe in our affairs in a ſupernatural manner, and controul the courſe of nature, without an immediate commiſſion from God and his Chriſt; then it is not true, that "there is none other God but one," or that Chriſt is the only Lord of mankind. As to the former point, there has been occaſion to conſider it already *: with reſpect to the latter, St. Paul obſerves, that it was abſurd in Chriſtians, who profeſſed to believe in the one Lord, to have communion with other lords or demons †; his power excluding theirs. He charges the Coloſſians "with not holding the head," or with ſubverting the authority of Chriſt, "by the worſhipping of angels," though they only aſcribed to them a delegated power and authority over mankind. Others, perhaps, may be able to reconcile theſe ſentiments of the apoſtle with the power of ſuperior beings to work miracles; to me they ſeem to corroborate the other proofs from revelation, that miracles argue a divine interpoſition.

* Chap. 3. ſect. 5.

† 1 Cor. x. 19, 20, 21.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

SHEWING, THAT THE SCRIPTURES HAVE NOT RECORDED ANY INSTANCES OF REAL MIRACLES PERFORMED BY THE DEVIL; IN ANSWER TO THE OBJECTIONS DRAWN FROM THE CASE OF THE MAGICIANS IN EGYPT, FROM THE APPEARANCE OF SAMUEL AFTER HIS DECEASE TO SAUL, AND FROM OUR SAVIOUR'S TEMPTATIONS IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE obſervations contained in the forego ig chapter, are, I hope, ſufficient to ſhew, that the Scriptures repreſent miracles as works appropriate to God, and never attribute them to any other beings, unleſs when acting by his immediate power and commiſſion. Nevertheleſs, to all this evidence it is objected, "that the Scriptures cannot conſider miracles as the works of God alone; inaſmuch as they relate ſeveral *inſtances*, in which evil ſpirits have actually performed genuine and inconteſtable miracles, without the order of God, in oppoſition to his meſſengers, and in ſupport of error and wickedneſs. This," it is alleged, "appears with the cleareſt evidence, from the works of the magicians in Egypt; from Samuel's being raiſed up by the ſorcereſs at Endor; and from our Saviour's temptations in the wilderneſs by the evil ſpirit."

But

But if these narratives establish the actual exercise of a miraculous power by the devil; then the Scriptures grosly contradict themselves, when (as I think, we have already shewn) they deny this power to the devil, and appropriate it to God. But before we charge them with such gros self-contradiction, we ought to inquire, (if we treat them with the same candour we do other writings,) whether the facts they record, and the doctrine they teach, are not perfectly consistent. To this end, let us proceed to examine the several cases which are appealed to, in support of the devil's power of working miracles. We will begin with considering

SECT. I.

The Case of the Magicians who opposed Moses.

VARIOUS are the accounts, which learned men have given of the works of the magicians in Egypt. Some have supposed, that God himself empowered the magicians to work true miracles, and gave them an unexpected success *. But whatever they performed, the history ascribes it, not to God, but to their inchantments. Besides, would it not be injurious to the character of the Deity, to suppose that he acted in opposition to himself? Would he

* Dr. Fleetwood on miracles, Disc. 1. and Dr. Shuckford's Connexion, V. 2. p. 422. 2d edit.

he work ſome miracles to confront the authority of Moſes, at the ſame time that he was working other miracles to eſtabliſh it? And how, in this caſe, ſhould Pharaoh know, whether it was his duty to diſmiſs the Iſraelites, or to detain them? Would God, by a miraculous interpoſition, require him to do, and not to do, the very ſame thing?

Others imagine, that the devil aſſiſted the magicians, not in performing true miracles, but in deceiving the ſenſes of the ſpectators, or in preſenting before them deluſive appearances of true miracles. But we have already ſhewn * in general, that with regard to the ſpectators, there is no manner of difference between *appearing* and *real* miracles, when the fictions or illuſions are not diſtinguiſhable from realities. And if Moſes had affirmed the works of the magicians to be diabolical deluſions, or mere deceptions of the ſight; why might not Pharaoh have affirmed the ſame concerning the works of Moſes? If one ſide had pretended, for inſtance, that the devil ſecretly ſtole away the rods, and ſubſtituted ſerpents in their ſtead; the ſame might have been ſaid by the other ſide: and the trial or competition muſt have ended in a common diſtruſt of the ſenſes by both parties, in confuſion, or mutual reproaches of fraud and impoſition.

The opinion concerning the works of the magicians, which has moſt generally obtained ſince the time of St. Auſtin, is, that they were not only performed

* Ch. 1. ſect. 3. p. 30, 31.

formed by the power of the devil, but were genuine miracles, and real imitations of thoſe of Moſes. This opinion, however, has been rejected by ſeveral eminent writers, and even by ſome very zealous aſſertors * of the power of ſuperior beings to work miracles without the order of God; and who therefore might have acquieſced in the common explication of this hiſtory, had they not ſeen other reaſons for departing from it, drawn from the circumſtances of the hiſtory itſelf. What I ſhall attempt to ſhew, is, that the magicians did not perform works really ſupernatural, nor were aſſiſted by any ſuperior inviſible being. In order to form a right judgment of this ſubject, it may not be improper to conſider

I. The character and pretenſions of the magicians. It has been already ſhewn from the teſtimony of Heathen writers, that the ancient magicians undertook to explain and to accompliſh things which were deemed far beyond the reach of other mens capacities †. Conformably to this view of them given us by

* This is the caſe with regard to Dr. Sykes in particular. His account of the magicians contains ſome excellent obſervations; nevertheleſs his zeal to maintain the power of ſuperior beings, and even of *evil* ſpirits, to work genuine miracles, prevented him from taking notice of the ſtrongeſt objections againſt the common explication of the performances of the magicians. At the ſame time he has given, what I conceive to be, a very falſe account of their character and pretenſions; and left unexplained many circumſtances of the hiſtory, which are neceſſary to the right underſtanding of it.

† Ch. 3. ſect. 3.

by Pagan antiquity, we learn from the ſacred writers, that they were applied to by the kings of Egypt and Babylon to interpret and decypher their dreams *, as well as to diſcredit the miracles of Moſes. In the exerciſe of their art, they relied much on their ſuperior knowledge of the ſecret powers of nature; yet we are not from hence to infer, with a late learned writer †, that they did not pretend to any commerce with ſpirits or demons: for the extravagant prodigies they undertook to perform, their ceremonies, ſupplications and prayers to the gods for aid and ſucceſs, demonſtrate the contrary §. Magic was indeed an art, and might be learnt, like any other art, from perſons ſkilful in it: but it was founded on the Pagan ſyſtem of theology, conſiſted in the practice of the rites of ſuperſtition, and pretended even to a power of compelling the gods to execute their deſires. The appellations by which Moſes deſcribes the magicians, agrees with the account here given of their character and pretenſions. They are called *wiſemen*, *ſorcerers*, and *magicians* ‡. The original word which we render

* Gen. xli. 8. Dan. ii. 10, 27. ch. iv. 7. See below, note ‡, p. 288.

† Dr. Sykes on miracles, p. 142. Becauſe witchcraft was an art, the doctor concludes that witches did not pretend to receive their power from demons: whereas it was conſidered as the art of ſetting demons to work.

§ Ch. 3. ſect. 3.

‡ "Then Pharaoh alſo called the wiſemen and the ſorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they alſo did," &c. Exod. vii. 11.

der, *magicians*, does properly signify persons who undertake *to explain things obscure and difficult* *. It is here used as a general term, and comprehends under it *wisemen* and *sorcerers*; as is evident from the manner in which they are mentioned ¶. Their being denominated *wisemen*, denotes their being the professors of science. With regard to the word we render *sorcerers* †, it is derived from a verb ‡, which signifies to use juggling tricks, to delude the sight with false appearances, so as to make a thing seem otherwise than it is ‖; or rather to practise fascination and charms. The word is always joined in Scripture with those which signify *divination, fortune-telling*, or *revealing secrets*: and it is from the same root that the words which we render *witches* and *witchcraft* are derived §. Dr. Sykes ** and others have taken much fruitless pains

* See Le Clerc on Gen. xli. 8. (where the LXX render it by a word that signifies *interpreters*,) and compare Dan. v. 11, 12. It is often explained by genethliaci or sapientes nativitatum, and is joined with astrologers and soothsayers, Dan. i. 20. ch. ii. 10, 27. ch. iv. 7.

¶ See note ‡, p. 286.

† Heb. mecasheph im. ‡ Cashap.

‖ Vid. Buxtorf & Pagnin. in voc.

§ See Exod. xxii. 18. Deut. xviii. 10. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. 2 Kings ix. 22. Mic. v. 12. Le Clerc renders the word mecasheph im, *diviners*, Exod. vii. 11. And as these mecasheph im (sorcerers or diviners) made use of dangerous drugs, and often employed their art in poisoning, the LXX render the word by φαρμακοὶ.

** On miracles, p. 166. When this learned writers affirms, that magic does not seem to be so old as the days of Moses in Egypt,

pains to prove, that all the names by which the magicians are deſcribed, import only *legerdemain;* as if they had been jugglers by *profeſſion*, as well as *practice*. There has been occaſion * to obſerve, that the Scripture deſcribes the Heathen gods, and thoſe who pretended to any intercourſe with them, by their uſual appellations. And the names here given the magicians ſeem to expreſs what they were by profeſſion †; they affected the reputation of ſuperior knowlege ‡; and pretended both to explain and effect ſigns, prodigies and wonders, by obſerving the rules of their art. Theſe are the perſons who were called in by Pharaoh on the preſent occaſion; and we have ſeen already that the Scripture denies them the ability of diſcovering or effecting any thing ſupernatural ||.

II.

Egypt, p. 158; he contradicts both the hiſtory before us, and Gen. xli. 8: which agree well with the later accounts of this art; as will appear to any one who compares what occurs here, with what was advanced above, ch. 3. ſect. 3.

* P. 253, 274.

† This is certainly the caſe, as to the two words *magicians*, and *wiſemen*; and therefore moſt probably is ſo with regard to the third, *ſorcerers*. And indeed the word itſelf does more properly import the practice of faſcination and charms, than of legerdemain.

‡ In confirmation of what is obſerved here and above (ch. 3. ſect. 3.) concerning the magicians, I add a paſſage from Tacitus, Hiſt. l. 4. Ptolomæus omine & miraculo excitus, ſacerdotibus Egyptiorum, quibus *mos* talia intelligere, nocturnos viſus aperit.

|| Ch. 3. ſect. 3.

II. We are, in the next place, to inquire, with what design they were sent for by Pharaoh.

To suppose that they were sent for, to engage the gods of Egypt to work miracles, in direct opposition to the God of Israel; and thereby to invalidate Moses's divine commission; is to contradict the fundamental principles of the Pagan theology, in which the king of Egypt had been educated. Though the Heathen poets do sometimes represent the gods as quarrelling with one another, and taking different sides; some favouring a particular person, others persecuting him *: nevertheless, the claims of the different deities of the Pagans were supposed to be consistent with each other †; and their theology, instead of encouraging its votaries, to hope that one deity should protect them from the vengeance, or act in direct defiance of another, rather taught them to appease and gain over to their own side those deities, who were supposed to be angry with them, and to protect their enemies ‡. So that had Pharaoh admitted,

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* Ovid. Trist. l. 1. eleg. 2. v. 4.

† See above, ch. 3. sect. 5. p. 244.

‡ Cyrus endeavoured to appease the gods of the countries which he invaded, Xenoph. Cyropæd. l. 3. The Romans evoked the tutelary gods of the cities they besieged, Macrob. Saturnal. l. 3. c. 9. Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 24. c. 17. § 102. Plutarch. Crassum, p. 553. A. The Tyrians, when besieged by Alexander, bound the statues of Apollo and Hercules, to prevent them from deserting to the enemy, Quintus Curt. l. 4. c. 3. And the Lacedemonians, during war, prayed very early in the morning; that being the first solicitors, they might pre-engage the

ted, that the works of Moſes had been performed by the God of the Hebrews; he would not have applied to the Egyptian deities to oppoſe his operations and claims *. Beſides, on the principles of Pagans, who held the doctrine of local and tutelary deities, the performance of miracles by the gods of one country, would not have deſtroyed the claims ariſing from the like miracles performed by the gods of another country. And therefore if Pharaoh conſidered the God of Iſrael as a local deity, he would not have thought Moſes's commiſſion from him invalidated by miracles performed by the gods of Egypt. But it is apparent, from the attempts of the magicians, that they did not ſtrive to engage the gods of Egypt to limit, or controul, or in any manner to oppoſe, the God of Iſrael. For, in this caſe, they would have endeavoured to traverſe and *counteract* the aim of the adverſe divinity, not to *promote* it; and would have entreated their gods, not to aggravate and inhance the tremendous effects of Jehovah's diſpleaſure by inflicting like judgments, but to diminiſh or remove thoſe already inflicted: not to turn more water into blood, for example, but to reſtore the corrupted waters to their natural ſtate: not to multiply frogs, but to remove or deſtroy

the gods in their favour, Xenophon de Laced. Rep. When Balaam was ſent for to curſe the Iſraelites, he had no expectation of ſucceſs, without the permiſſion of their God, Numb. xxiii. 27. Thoſe who conquered any country, adopted the gods of the vanquiſhed people.

* See Shuckford, V. 2. p. 406.

deſtroy them; eſpecially as it was, at leaſt, equally eaſy to do the latter as the former. Could the deities of Egypt more effectually expoſe themſelves to the reproaches and indignation of their votaries, than by committing acts of hoſtility againſt them, inſtead of protecting or delivering them from the plagues and vengeance of the adverſe Divinity? And were the Egyptians likewiſe ſo infatuated, as to deſire the divine guardians of their country, to join with the God of the Hebrews in bringing down more and heavier judgments, and adding to thoſe direful plagues which he had already inflicted? If Pharaoh and his magicians contrived no better for the relief or protection of their country, we may be certain that Egypt, in their days, was not famed for wiſdom.

The real ſtate of the caſe ſeems to have been, that Moſes having in the name of Jehovah, the God of the univerſe, who had taken the Hebrews under his peculiar protection, demanded of Pharaoh leave for them to go three days journey into the wilderneſs, to perform a ſacrifice; and having at the requeſt of the king of Egypt *ſhewn him a miracle* *, by turning his rod into a ſerpent, in order to authenticate the divinity of his miſſion; Pharaoh, notwithſtanding this miracle, refuſed to conſent to the demand of Moſes. It is natural to ſuppoſe, that a ſuſpicion that the Iſraelites were meditating an eſcape from that wretched ſlavery in which they were detained, (which might naturally ſpring up in a mind conſcious of its own in-

* Exod. vii. 9.

juſtice and oppreſſion,) and the fear of loſing ſo very numerous and valuable a body of ſlaves, together with all their flocks and herds; would prevent Pharaoh from being forward on this occaſion, either to receive or follow conviction. We ſhall the leſs doubt of this, if we call to mind the pride of princes, (which is not eaſily reconciled to a diminution of their grandeur,) or the peculiar rigour of the Egyptian policy, and the aſtoniſhing magnificence of their public works *. Pharaoh was, as he told Moſes, a ſtranger to Jehovah, in whoſe name he came: a Deity worſhipped only by his Hebrew ſlaves, whom he had permitted to groan under the moſt cruel oppreſſions, and even amongſt them very little, and but lately known. And his character as the God of the univerſe, the *only* true God, being ſubverſive of the claims of all the Egyptian deities, would at firſt appear, to one accuſtomed to worſhip a plurality of gods, (many of whom, and particularly the lights of heaven, were thought to exhibit continually the moſt conſpicuous proofs of their divinity,) as the higheſt abſurdity and blaſphemy. The Egyptians were early famed for wiſdom and learning, and more eſpecially for their knowlege of the nature and worſhip of the gods; their ſentiments on this ſubject

* The pyramids are a proof of the peculiar turn and genius of the Egyptians to works of magnificence and grandeur; which is alſo confirmed by the teſtimony of Diodorus Siculus, l. 1. p. 27. ed. Rhodomani. The Iſraelites were employed in their public buildings, as appears from Exodus, ch. i. and v. and, no doubt, in many other ways ſo large a body of people muſt contribute to the benefit of the ſtate.

ſubject ſeem to have been received with deference and ſubmiſſion by all the neighbouring nations. At the ſame time they exceeded them all in zeal for ſuperſtition and idolatry. It muſt therefore be difficult for us to conceive, what great offence it gave to their pride and bigotry, to be told, that there was no other God but Jehovah, and that the Iſraelites, at that time the moſt deſpicable and wretched part of mankind, were his peculiar people. This was upbraiding *Egypt* with ignorance and impiety, as well as with injuſtice and cruelty.

Nor is it at all unlikely, that Pharaoh might ſomewhat doubt at firſt, whether the miracle which had been wrought for his conviction, did certainly ſurpaſs the powers of nature, and the ſcience of magic, and was a proper proof of the ſole Divinity of the God of Iſrael. He had never till then ſeen an example of this kind; nor indeed had ſuch wonders, as thoſe of Moſes in Egypt, ever been performed before this time: which might occaſion ſome heſitation and ſurprize. The laws of nature in general, and thoſe in particular concerning the generation of animals, the ſeaſons, circumſtances and means of their being produced and brought to life, were not ſo well underſtood, as at preſent. And as they conceived of the whole ſyſtem of nature as animated and divine *, they entertained an extravagant opinion of its hidden powers. Learning was in a few hands; and therefore it was not ſo eaſy to diſtinguiſh what was merely un-

* See above, ch. 3. ſect. 2. at the beginning.

uſual and aſtoniſhing, from what was ſupernatural. A few ages ago our own countryman, friar Roger Bacon, in virtue of his improvements in natural knowledge, paſſed for a conjurer, without having any deſign on his part to impoſe upon the people. The antient magicians *ſtudied* to raiſe in others the higheſt poſſible idea of their profeſſion. And it was the received opinion of antiquity, that divination and prodigies (with the laſt of which Egypt * abounded more than any other country,) were the effect of the natural influence of the elements and planets, and that magicians who dived into the arcana or ſecrets of nature, and were maſters of their own profeſſion, could regularly bring them to paſs, according to the fixed and certain principles of their ſcience. In this ſcience Moſes himſelf had been inſtructed. And probably the firſt thought of Pharaoh was, that Moſes was nothing more than a magician †.

In this view of things, what was more natural than for Pharaoh to ſend for his magicians, in order to learn from them, whether the ſign given by Moſes was truly ſupernatural, or only ſuch as their art was able to accompliſh. The nature of their attempts correſpond with

* Τέρατά τε πλέω σφι εὕρηται ἢ τοῖσι ἄλλοισι ἅπασι ἀνθρώποισι. Herodot. Euterpe, c. 82.

† Moſes had been brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, and was "learned in all the wiſdom of the Egyptians," Acts vii. 22; and therefore it was natural to account him a magician. On the very ſame grounds, Daniel and the three children were accounted magicians at Babylon, Dan. i. 4, 20. ch. iv. 7—9. ch. v. 11.

with this view of Pharaoh in calling them to his aſſiſtance. For they did not undertake to *out-do* Moſes, or to *controul* him by *ſuperior* or *oppoſite* acts of power, but barely to *imitate* him, or to do the ſame works with his: which they did with a view to invalidate the argument which he drew from his miracles, in ſupport of the ſole Divinity of Jehovah, and of his own miſſion. And had the magicians ſucceeded in their attempt, and, in the exerciſe of their art, really performed the ſame extraordinary acts as Moſes did; it would have followed of courſe, that Moſes, whatever he might pretend, was a magician only * and not an extraordinary divine meſſenger; and that Jehovah was not the only ſovereign of nature †. It is of the laſt importance therefore to attend to the true point in queſtion upon this occaſion. The queſtion was not, and could not be, "Are the gods of Egypt ſu-"perior to the God of Iſrael? or, Can any evil ſpi-"rits perform greater miracles than thoſe which Mo-"ſes performed by the aſſiſtance of Jehovah?" Every circumſtance of the hiſtory ſerves to ſhew, that the queſtion was, "Are the works of Moſes proper "proofs, that the God of Iſrael is Jehovah, the only "ſovereign of nature, and conſequently that Moſes

* Pliny (in his Nat. Hiſt. l. 30. c. 2.) mentions Moſes amongſt the moſt illuſtrious magicians: which is the higheſt character under which he could be conſidered on the common hypotheſis.

† See ch. 3. ſect. 5. p. 227, 245. If the magicians had performed real miracles, the conſequences would have been the ſame as if Baal had anſwered by fire. P. 247.

" acts by his commiſſion? or, Are they merely the " wonders of nature, and the effects of magic *?" To reſolve this queſtion, Pharaoh ſent for his magicians; and they by their magical feats undertook to ſhew, that Moſes's works lay within the compaſs of their art, and therefore could be no proofs of the high claims of the God of Iſrael, or of Moſes's divine commiſſion.

III. But it may be aſked, what motives could induce the magicians to make ſuch an attempt, ſince notwithſtanding Pharaoh might, *they* could not be ignorant of the extent of their own art? When they were firſt ſent for to court, they as well as Pharaoh might conceive of Moſes as nothing more than a magician, like themſelves. And though it be too weak an authority for ſuch an ancient fact, yet it may deſerve juſt to be mentioned, on account of the probability of the thing itſelf, that according to the *Talmud*, when Moſes began to work his miracles, the magicians bantered him, ſaying, " Thou bringeſt ſtraw to Affra†," (or, as we ſhould expreſs it, " Thou bringeſt

* It may be worth obſerving, that both Philo (de vita Moſis, l. 1. p. 616.) and Joſephus (Antiq. Jud. l. 2. c. 13.) place the ſubject in the ſame light.

† The learned authors of the Univerſal Hiſtory, though they adopt the common explication of the wonders of the magicians, have taken notice of this Jewiſh tradition. And they farther obſerve, that Philo introduces them ſpeaking to Pharaoh and his court, to this purpoſe, " Why are you affrighten- " ed? We are not ignorant of ſuch things, ſeeing we profeſs " the ſame ourſelves." Univerſal Hiſtory, v. 3. 8vo. p. 373. note E.

bringeſt coals to Newcaſtle;") meaning that he had judged ill to play his tricks in a country ſtocked with magicians, who were as well verſed as himſelf in the powers of nature, and in the knowlege of the ſecret arts. And it is certain, that they muſt ſoon diſcover, how reluctant the king was to part with the Iſraelites, and therefore how acceptable to him it would be, ſhould they by their ſkill and dexterity be able to imitate, and thereby to diſcredit the miracles of Moſes. And by a mind prejudiced as his was, they well knew, that mere cavils, and the moſt barefaced ſophiſtry are often eſteemed a ſufficient confutation of the moſt concluſive arguments. Beſides, the king, reſolutely determined not to hearken to Moſes, might be ſo unreaſonable as to require that of his magicians which was beyond their power*; by which they might be tempted to have recourſe to artifice, to ſcreen themſelves from his vengeance. And their concern at all times, from motives of pride and ambition†, to raiſe the reputation of their art to an extravagant height, continually prompted them to have recourſe to fallacy to ſupport it. And this extravagance of their pretenſions gave ſome colour to the reſentment of princes, when their boaſted enterprizes failed in

* See Dan. ii. 1—13. The prophets of Baal likewiſe, 1 Kings xviii. 24. made an experiment, without any well-grounded expectation of ſucceſs, becauſe the people approved of Elijah's propoſal.

† Strabo (Geogr. l. 1.) tells us, "that the prieſts of Egypt, "the Chaldeans and magi obtained great honour and pre-emi-"nence, becauſe they excelled in all kinds of knowlege."

in the execution. In the caſe before us, the magicians of Egypt were under every temptation to encounter Moſes at all hazards, and if poſſible to ſupply by colluſion their defect of power. And they might the more eaſily hope for ſucceſs and applauſe, or at leaſt to avoid diſgrace and detection, as they knew the whole court as well as the king would be forward to avail themſelves of the appearance not only of equality, but of any reſemblance between their performances and thoſe of Moſes. From this repreſentation of the motives and aims of the magi, let us now proceed to conſider thoſe of Moſes.

IV. If we examine the principles and conduct of Moſes, we ſhall ſoon be ſenſible, that he could not allow the magicians performed real miracles. For

1. We have already proved, that the Scriptures ever repreſent the whole body of magicians as impoſtors *, who were incapable of ſupporting their pretenſions by any works or predictions beyond human power and ſkill.

2. It has been alſo ſhewn †, that all the ſacred writers, and Moſes in particular, repreſent all the Heathen deities (on the belief of whoſe exiſtence and influence the ‡ magic art was founded) as unſupported by any inviſible ſpirits, and in themſelves utterly impotent and ſenſeleſs; and certainly therefore incapable of imitating the ſtupendous miracles of Moſes.

3. This

* Ch. 3. ſect. 3. p. 182.

† Ch. 3. ſect. 3. p. 156, 157.

‡ Ch. 3. ſect. 2. p. 178.

3. This divine prophet farther taught, that the God of Iſrael was Jehovah, who alone created the world by his power, and ruled it continually by his providence *. His religion was built on the unity and ſole dominion of God, as its foundation. And the point which Moſes *at this very time* was about to eſtabliſh, was, the ſole Divinity of Jehovah †, in direct oppoſition to the principles of idolatry, and conſequently with a view of expoſing the abſolute nullity of all the Heathen gods; the claims of the former being ſubverſive of thoſe of the latter. If Moſes therefore allowed, that the Heathen idols (or, which we have ſhewn to be the ſame thing, any evil ſpirits ‡ ſupporting their cauſe) enabled the magicians "to "turn rods into ſerpents, and water into blood, and "to create frogs ||," and conſequently any other ſpecies of animals, which require only equal ſkill and power; he contradicts the great deſign of his miſſion; and overturns the whole fabric of his religion. For on the ſuppoſition here made, the Heathen deities are not mere nullities, and Jehovah is not God alone.

* Ch. 3. ſect. 5. p. 228.

† Ch. 3. ſect. 5. p. 232, 236.

‡ Ch. 3. ſect. 2. p. 162.

|| I might have added, that the advocates of the common hypotheſis (in effect) allow, that thoſe inviſible beings who ſupported the magicians, had a power of *turning duſt into lice*, when they aſcribe their not doing it, to their being *reſtrained* by God.

alone. Whatever beings are able to create ſeveral different ſpecies of animals, and to multiply them at pleaſure, (and hereby to deſtroy the wiſe economy of the animal world,) and to change the inmoſt nature both of inanimate ſubſtances, and of living beings; whether we will allow ſuch beings the *name* of God or not, they certainly poſſeſs in a very high degree thoſe *powers*, which, according to the united teſtimony of reaſon and revelation, are the appropriate and diſtinguiſhing glories of the one true God. If the bringing things into exiſtence, be no teſt of a divine interpoſition, to what more authentic teſt can we appeal? The creation of beings endued with *life*, does more eſpecially ſeem to be a branch of the divine prerogative *; the loweſt degrees of animal life having an excellence and dignity ſuperior to all the glories of inanimate nature †. Such a creating power, and

* A creating power is repreſented in Scripture as a divine prerogative, If. xliv. 24. and as the foundation of the worſhip which God claims from mankind, Jerem. v. 22. "His glory he will not give to another." If. xlii. 8. ch. xlviii. 11.

† What biſhop Sherlock affirms concerning the miracles of Moſes, (V. 1. p. 283.) would be true alſo of the works of the magicians, had they been, as he ſuppoſes, real miracles: "They "were ſo near akin to the works of creation, that by a juſt "compariſon they might be known to come from the ſame au-"thor." Or rather, ſince works of creation were performed by oppoſite inviſible powers; it would follow of courſe, that there was a plurality of creators; and therefore of rival Gods. See above, ch. 2. ſect. 4. Were the common account of the magicians true; their works muſt neceſſarily have been conſidered by Pharaoh as a full demonſtration of the exiſtence and power

and ſuch a ſovereignty over nature, as the Heathen deities are here ſuppoſed to have diſplayed, muſt make it difficult, if not impoſſible, to determine, what parts of the creation, and what events of providence are to be aſcribed to God alone. Who can tell how far the power of evil ſpirits may extend on other occaſions, when uncontrouled by God; if they were capable even of oppoſing and contravening, in ſuch an aſtoniſhing degree, his operations and deſigns, at the very time he was publicly aſſerting his own peculiar honours *?.

4. Moſes appropriates all miracles to God, and urges his own as an abſolute and authentic proof, both of the ſole Divinity of Jehovah, and of his own miſſion †: which he could not juſtly do, if his oppoſers performed miracles, and even the very ſame with his. But here it is alleged, notwithſtanding we ſhould admit that the magicians wrought real miracles, yet that in the iſſue it appeared, Moſes was ſupported by the true God; becauſe he performed more and

power of his own gods, and as a fuller vindication of their worſhip (at leaſt of a ſubordinate worſhip,) than the Pagan prieſthood ever produced.

* It is the more incredible, that God ſhould now ſuffer any evil ſpirit to work miracles in oppoſition to himſelf; as this was the *firſt time* of interpoſing in a miraculous manner, for the conviction of the world, and no ſuch miracles were performed in any ſubſequent conteſt between him and the idol gods. 1 Kings xviii.

† See the paſſages cited above, ch. 3. ſect. 5. p. 236. ſect. 6. p. 249. and below, p. 304—307.

and greater miracles than his oppoſers. "The mira-
"cles performed by the magicians in Egypt," (ſays an able and eloquent writer *,) "were ſo far from "leſſening the authority of the works done by Mo-"ſes, that they added to it: For, the greater the "powers were which God humbled and ſubdued, "the greater evidence did he give of his own ſupe-"riority." Many other learned writers have likewiſe pleaded, that the miracles oppoſed by the idolatrous magicians to thoſe of Moſes, the prophet of God, ſerved only to ſet off the divine power to the greateſt advantage. But I can not perſuade myſelf, that the power of God appears to any, much leſs to the beſt advantage; but when it performs works peculiar to itſelf, ſuch as no creatures are able to imitate; and carries the divine deſigns into execution, without any controul. The *ſuperiority* however of the true God to the Heathen deities, was not the point in queſtion. What Moſes propoſed to prove, was, that Jehovah was God alone, and that there was none beſides him, and conſequently that the Heathen gods were mere nullities. Now, if in their names very great miracles were performed by the magicians, and ſtill greater by Moſes in the name of Jehovah; though we may allow that hereby Jehovah proved himſelf ſuperior † to

* Biſhop Sherlock, in his Diſcourſes, V. 1. p. 285.

† It was ſhewn above, ch. 2. ſect. 6. p. 83, that in the caſe of ſuch a conteſt as is here ſuppoſed, between two oppoſite parties working miracles for victory; though he who exerts greater acts of power than his opponent, may be allowed to poſſeſs

to the Heathen gods; yet this ſuperiority to them will not prove that he is God alone, and that the Heathen gods were nullities, deſtitute of that very power which they viſibly exerted. "The greater "the powers were which God humbled and ſubdu-"ed;" with ſo much the leſs truth could they be repreſented as impotent and ſenſeleſs idols. Had Moſes, while he allowed to the gods of Egypt a creating power, (or what ſeems very nearly to approach it;) attempted nothing more than to prove the ſuperiority of the God of Iſrael; this would rather have eſtabliſhed than over-turned the Pagan ſyſtem, which was built upon a belief of gods of different orders, who poſſeſſed various degrees of excellence and power.

But a caſe ſo very abſurd, as that of two oppoſite parties working miracles for victory, would never have been put, had the defenders of revelation more carefully attended to the ſtate of the controverſy * between the prophets of God, and the antient idolaters. And were it true in general, that in caſe of a conteſt between two parties performing real miracles, he who does the moſt and greateſt is ſent of God; yet this would be of no ſervice to the cauſe of Moſes; becauſe he places the truth of his miſſion on a different footing. Moſes certainly beſt underſtood the evidence ariſing from his own miracles; and it is impoſſible

poſſeſs greater degrees of power; yet it will not follow from hence, that he is aſſiſted by the Divine power.

* Ch. 3. ſect. 5. p. 243.

impoſſible to make a juſt vindication of them, unleſs we vindicate the uſe to which *he* applies them. Now Moſes never alleges in his own favour, that on the whole he performed more and greater miracles, than his oppoſers *. He urges his miracles in an abſolute, not in a comparative view, as full proofs of his miſſion from Jehovah: which he could not juſtly have done, at leaſt with regard to thoſe miracles which were performed both by him, and his rivals, had there been any ſuch. This will more fully appear under the next head, where we ſhall ſhew, that

5. Moſes not only urges his miracles in general, but even each individual miracle apart, as a compleat proof both of the Divinity of Jehovah, and his own miſſion. With regard to his firſt miracle, the transformation of his rod into a ſerpent, he was directed by God to perform and propoſe it both to the Iſraelites and Egyptians as *a ſign* †, ſurely not as a doubtful and fallacious, but as a certain and demonſtrative, ſign of his miſſion from Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews; without taking into conſideration any ſuppoſed ſuperiority he was afterwards to acquire. Yet how was the transformation of his rod a demonſtration of his being ſent by Jehovah, if the magicians produced

* Nor do any of the prophets of God ever plead the ſuperiority of their miracles, either in reſpect of number or excellence, to thoſe of their oppoſers; neceſſary as ſuch a plea would have been, in caſe their oppoſers had performed real miracles. Theſe divine meſſengers appeal to their works, as being in themſelves, and ſeparately conſidered, ſigns of a divine miſſion.

† Exod. iv. 1—5. cb. vii. 8, 9.

produced the very ſame credentials, to ſhew the falſehood of his commiſſion? Nay, the magicians, in the firſt conteſt, if they performed real miracles, not only imitated, but exceeded Moſes; having the advantage over him in the *number* of their miracles. For they turned not only one rod into a ſerpent, which was all Moſes had hitherto done; but they turned their ſeveral rods into ſerpents. Now, why is Moſes to be credited on account of a ſingle miracle, if it be contradicted and overborne by ſeveral miracles, fully equal to it? Beſides, with reſpect to the Iſraelites, they had not only been inſtructed to receive, but had actually received, Moſes as a meſſenger from Jehovah, the God of their fathers *, upon the evidence of the miraculous converſion of his rod into a ſerpent. What doubts then, nay, what ſhame on account of their own credulity, and what indignation againſt Moſes, muſt they have felt, when they ſaw this evidence overturned and deſtroyed, which Moſes had propoſed, and they had admitted, as valid in itſelf, without the aid of any farther miracle? Afterwards, it is true, Moſes's ſerpent ſwallowed up thoſe of the magicians: but this after-victory, however ſplendid, could not retrieve the credit of the former defeat; it could not eſtabliſh the validity of the proof, from the change of his rod, which he had appealed to in the beginning, as a deciſive teſtimony in his favour: but which was entirely deſtroyed by the magicians changing their rods into ſerpents. In like manner

* Exod. iv. 1—5.

ner, concerning the firſt miraculous plague; Moſes was commanded to ſay to Pharaoh, in the name of God, "IN THIS thou ſhalt know that I am Jehovah: behold, I will ſmite with the rod that is in mine hand, upon the waters which are in the river, and they ſhall be turned into blood *." Now, if the magicians afterwards performed the very ſame † kind

* Exod. vii. 17. See above, p. 237, note ‡, where other examples are produced, to ſhew what uſe Moſes makes of each individual miracle.

† I allow indeed, that, on the common hypotheſis, the miracles of turning water into blood, and bringing up frogs, as performed by the magicians, were not ſo extenſive, as the ſame miracles when performed by Moſes. But, on that hypotheſis, the reaſon might be, that when the magicians undertook theſe miracles, it was impoſſible to carry them to the ſame extent; the waters of Egypt being previouſly converted into blood, and the country covered with frogs, by Moſes. And to this cauſe, rather than to any defect of power in the magicians, the Egyptians would naturally aſcribe the difference between their works and thoſe of Moſes, if the former had been real miracles. In caſe you allow the magicians a miraculous power of turning water into blood, how will you ſhew, that they did not exert it, as far as the ſcarcity of water would permit, and therefore as far as it could have been exerted by Moſes himſelf, had he been in their ſituation? Why then ſhould it be taken for granted, by the advocates of the common hypotheſis, that, when the magicians had (it is ſuppoſed) turned a certain quantity of water into blood, their power was limited to that particular quantity, and could extend no farther; inaſmuch as the hiſtory contains an obvious reaſon for their not turning more water into blood, there being very little water on which the experiment could be made? When Chriſt converted into wine, the water in ſix veſſels; did he not hereby give proof of a power, which could

kind of miracle; it was no more a proof that the God of the Hebrews was Jehovah, than that one of the Egyptian idols was Jehovah. With what truth then could it be affirmed to Pharaoh, "By *this* mira-"cle, the diſtinguiſhing character of the true God "ſhall be fully made known and diſplayed?" Had

could have produced the ſame change in a much larger quantity? The limits of the miracle were determined by the occaſion and circumſtances of it, and do not create the leaſt preſumption of any defect of power. I add, that if this miracle of Chriſt was in itſelf a proof of a divine interpoſition; why do men deny the divinity of the ſimilar miracle, which they aſcribe to the magicians? From the mere nature of the work itſelf, no argument can be drawn to its diſadvantage. It was indeed leſs extenſive, than the correſponding miracle of Moſes; but we have accounted for this difference. Beſides, in miracles of the ſame kind, can the abettors of the common hypotheſis determine on their own principles, how far the power of the devil reaches, and where the power of God begins? Were we to allow them, that whenever one miracle exceeds another in extent, the moſt extenſive miracle muſt neceſſarily proceed from a being of the moſt extenſive power; this would not prove its divinity, as was ſhewn above, ch. 2. ſect. 6. Nor did Moſes ever reſt his miſſion, on his miracles being more extenſive, than the ſuppoſed miracles of the magicians. Nay, God himſelf ſays to Moſes, Exod. iv. 9. "If they will not believe even theſe two ſigns," (the turning the rod of Moſes into a ſerpent, and the ſerpent into a rod again, and the making his hand leprous and ſound,) "thou ſhalt take of the water of the river, and "pour it upon the dry land, and the water which thou takeſt "out of the river, ſhall become blood upon the dry land." Here the quantity of water could not be conſiderable; nevertheleſs, the converſion of it into blood is propoſed as a certain ſign of Moſes's divine miſſion.

Moſes on this occaſion referred the king for conviction to his ſubſequent miracles: this new evidence, however forcible, could not have reſcued him from the juſt reproach of having before offered (and by a pretended command of God) ſuch as was futile and fallacious, and of ſtill claiming a title to a divine legation, which, on the iſſue he had put it, had been already decided againſt him. Though we ſhould allow Moſes but the common diſcretion of a man, and deny him the divine guidance of a prophet of God; we cannot ſuppoſe him guilty of ſo weak a conduct as this; which muſt have ſunk the Iſraelites into deſpondency, afforded the Egyptians juſt occaſion of triumph, and fully vindicated Pharaoh in treating Moſes as an impoſtor, who had offered falſe teſts of a divine agency and miſſion. Our learned divines would never have ſuppoſed, that Moſes believed the magicians performed real miracles, and the ſame with his own; had they conſidered the uſe which this divine prophet makes of each diſtinct and particular miracle which he performed.

6. The abſurdity of ſuppoſing that Moſes allows the magicians the credit of real miracles, will appear in a ſtill ſtronger light, if we recollect *the order of time*, in which their ſuppoſed miracles, and thoſe of Moſes, were performed. Dr. Clarke*, after moſt other writers, ſeems to have inverted the true order of time, when he places the miracles of the magicians firſt: "The magicians worked ſeveral miracles to "prove

* Vol. 2. p. 700. fol.

" prove Moſes an impoſtor, and not ſent of God; " Moſes, to prove his divine commiſſion, worked mi- " racles more and greater than theirs." But, according to the hiſtory, Moſes firſt of all turns his rod into a ſerpent; and thereby, according to his own and our repreſentation, fully eſtabliſhes his divine miſſion. Immediately after, his oppoſers deſtroy the force of that evidence to which he had appealed, by producing (according to the common hypotheſis) the very ſame evidence, and in a more perfect degree, to prove him an impoſtor. In the next place, Jehovah interpoſes to recover the loſt credit of his meſſenger, and the ſerpent of Moſes ſwallows up thoſe of the magicians. But the ſpectators might juſtly doubt, whether one ſerpent's eating another was a greater miracle, than the turning ſeveral rods into ſo many ſerpents; and therefore muſt remain in ſuſpence on which ſide the ſuperiority lay. However that might be, Jehovah a third time engages to evince his own Divinity, and the authority of his ambaſſador, by turning the waters of Nile into blood. But now the evil ſpirit (according to the commonly received account of this matter) interpoſes in his turn, and by rivalling the operations of Jehovah, defeats his intention, and expoſes the inſufficiency of the means uſed to accompliſh it; and hereby gains a temporary triumph over the profeſſed ſovereign of the univerſe. God interpoſes again, and with the ſame view as before, and brings frogs upon the land of Egypt. But his intentions are again fruſtrated by Satan, who performed the ſame atchievement, to convince the world that

that work had been falſely arrogated by God as his ſole prerogative. Thus (according to the prevailing hypotheſis) were the claims of Jehovah and Moſes on the one hand, and of the magicians and the devil on the other, alternately eſtabliſhed and deſtroyed; the ſuperiority of power appearing on both ſides at different times: nay, hitherto more frequently, and indeed more inconteſtably belonging to the devil, than to God; inaſmuch as it was not Jehovah who controuled the ſuppoſed miracles of the devil, (one inſtance alone excepted,) but the devil who controuled the miracles of Jehovah. The abettors of the common hypotheſis are concerned to ſhew, that their account of this conteſt, if traced into its genuine conſequences, is not big with impiety, and the moſt diſhonourable apprehenſions of the bleſſed God. Can they deliberately perſuade themſelves, that the almighty ſovereign of nature would engage in an open conteſt for ſupremacy with the devil? and that he would ſuffer him to appear on ſome occaſions as his rival, and even as his ſuperior, capable of fruſtrating his great deſigns, invalidating the proofs he thought fit to give of his univerſal dominion, and hereby rendering him contemptible in the eyes of the Iſraelites and Egyptians? Or, could his claim to be Jehovah, and the only ſovereign of nature, be both true and falſe? For theſe reaſons, (and ſeveral others which will occur in the ſequel,) Moſes could not repreſent the magicians as performing real miracles.

V. Here perhaps it may be objected, that Moſes deſcribes the works of the magicians in the very ſame language

language as he does his own *; and therefore that there is reason to conclude, that they were equally miraculous. To which I answer,

1. That nothing is more common, than to speak of professed jugglers as *doing*, what they *pretend* and *appear* to do †; and that this language never misleads us, when we reflect what sort of men are spoken of, namely, mere impostors on the sight. Why might not Moses then use the common popular language, when speaking of the magicians, without any danger of misconstruction; inasmuch as the subject he was treating, all the circumstances of the narrative, and the opinion which the historian was known to entertain of the inefficacy and imposture of magic, did all concur to prevent mistakes?

2. Moses does not affirm, that there was a perfect

* "The magicians of Egypt also did in like manner with "their inchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, "and they became serpents." Exod. vii. 11, 12. After Aaron had turned all the waters of Egypt into blood, it is said, "The magicians did so with their inchantments," v. 22. And again it is said, "The magicians did so with their inchant- "ments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt," ch. viii. 7.

† When Moses describes what the magicians pretended and seemed to perform by saying, "They cast down every man his "rod, and they became serpents, and they brought up frogs "upon the land of Egypt;" he only uses the same language as Apuleius, (Metam. l. 1.) when describing a person who merely played juggling tricks, Circulatorem aspexi equestrem spatham præacutam mucrone infesto devorasse: ac mox eundem,—venatoriam lanceam,—in ima viscera condidisse.

conformity between his works and thoſe of the magicians. He does not cloſe the reſpective relations of his own particular miracles with ſaying, The magicians did "that thing *," or, "According to what he did, ſo did they †;" (a form of ſpeech uſed on this occaſion, no leſs than three times in one chapter, to deſcribe the exact correſpondence between the orders of God, and the behaviour of his ſervants): but makes choice of a word of great latitude, ſuch as does not neceſſarily expreſs any thing more than a general ſimilitude, ſuch as is conſiſtent with a difference in many important reſpects: They did *ſo*, or *in like manner*, as he had done. That a perfect imitation of Moſes could not be deſigned by this word, is evident from its being applied to caſes, in which ſuch an imitation was abſolutely impracticable: for when Aaron had converted all the waters of Egypt into blood ‡, we are told, "the magicians did ſo," that is, ſomething *in like ſort*. Nor can it be ſuppoſed, that they covered the land of Egypt with frogs; as will be ſhewn below. Nay, the word imports nothing more, than their *attempting* ſome imitation of Moſes: for it is uſed when they failed in their attempt. "They did SO——to bring forth lice, but "they could not ||."

3. So

* As in Exod. ix. 5, 6.

† Ch. vii. 6, 10. 20.

‡ Exod. vii. 20—25.

|| Ch. viii. 18. Le Clerc obſerves, Nec raro Hebræi, ad conatum notandum, verbis utuntur quæ rem effectam ſignificant.

3. So far is Moſes from aſcribing the tricks of the magicians to the invocation and power of demons, or to any ſuperior beings whatever; that he does moſt expreſsly refer all they did or attempted in imitation of himſelf, "to human artifice and impoſture." The original words which are tranſlated *inchantments* *, are entirely different from that rendered inchantments in other paſſages of Scripture, and do not carry in them any ſort of reference to ſorcery, or magic, or the interpoſition of any ſpiritual agents. They import deception and concealment, and ought to have been rendered, *ſecret ſleights* or *jugglings*; and are thus tranſlated even by thoſe who adopt the common hypotheſis

cant. Gen. xxxvii. 21. Conſult him likewiſe on Exod. viii. 18. ch. xii. 48. Pſ. lxvi. 2.

* The original word uſed Exod. vii. 11. is belahatehem; and that which occurs, ch. vii. 22. and ch. viii. 7, 18. is belatehem. The former is probably derived from lahat, which ſignifies 'to burn,' and the ſubſtantive 'a flame,' or 'ſhining ſword-blade;' and is applied to 'the flaming ſword' which guarded the tree of life. Gen. iii. 24. Thoſe who formerly uſed legerdemain dazzled and deceived the ſight of the ſpectators by the art of brandiſhing their ſwords, and ſometimes ſeemed to eat them, and to thruſt them into their bodies. And the expreſſion ſeems to intimate, that the magicians appearing to turn their rods into ſerpents, was owing to their eluding the eyes of the ſpectators by a dextrous management of their ſwords. In the ſucceeding inſtances they made uſe of ſome different contrivance: for the latter word belatehem comes from a word ſignifying 'to cover' or 'hide,' (which ſome think the former word alſo does;) and therefore fitly expreſſes any ſecret artifices or methods of deception, whereby falſe appearances are impoſed upon the ſpectators.

hypotheſis with regard to the magicians *. Theſe *ſecret ſleights* and *jugglings*, are expreſsly referred to the magicians, not to the devil, who is not ſo much as mentioned in the hiſtory. Should we therefore be aſked †, How it came to paſs, in caſe the works of the magicians were performed by ſleight of hand, that Moſes has given no *hint* thereof? We anſwer, he has not contented himſelf with a hint of this kind; but, at the ſame time that he aſcribes his own miracles to Jehovah, has in the moſt *direct terms* reſolved every thing done in imitation of them entirely to the fraudulent contrivances of his oppoſers, to legerdemain or ſleight of hand, in contradiſtinction from magical incantations. Moſes therefore could not deſign to repreſent their works as real miracles, at the very time he was branding them as impoſtures.

VI. It remains only to ſhew, that the works performed by the magicians, did not exceed the cauſe to which they are aſcribed; or, in other words, the magicians proceeded no farther in imitation of Moſes, than *human artifice* might enable them to go; (while the miracles of Moſes were not liable to the ſame impeachment, and bore upon themſelves the plaineſt ſignatures of that divine power to which they are referred.) If this can be proved, the interpoſition of the devil on this occaſion, will appear to be an hypotheſis invented without any kind of neceſſity, as

* Biſhop Kidder on Exod. vii. 11.

† As we are by Dr. Macknight, in his Truth of the Goſpel Hiſt. p. 372.

as it certainly is without any authority from the ſacred text.

1. With regard to the firſt attempt of the magicians, the turning rods into ſerpents; it cannot be accounted extraordinary, that they ſhould ſeem to ſucceed in it, when we conſider that theſe men were famous for the art of dazzling and deceiving the ſight; and that ſerpents, being firſt rendered tractable and harmleſs *, as they eaſily may, have had a thouſand different tricks played with them, to the aſtoniſhment of the ſpectators. Huetius † tells us, that amongſt the Chineſe there are jugglers who undertake to turn rods into ſerpents; though, no doubt, they only dextrouſly ſubſtitute the latter in the room of the former. Now, this is the very trick the magicians played: and it appears by facts, that the thing in general is very practicable. It is immaterial to account particularly, how the thing was done;

* Thoſe who deſire to ſee inſtances of this from modern authors, may conſult Dr. Sykes on miracles, p. 166—168. Many pretended to render ſerpents harmleſs by charms, (Pſ. lviii. 5. Bochart. Hieroz. Part. poſt. l. 3. c. 6. Shaw's travels, preface, p. 5. travels, p. 429. ſupplement, p. 62.) though more probably they deſtroyed the teeth through which they ejected their poiſon. Herodotus mentions certain ſerpents which were quite harmleſs, ἀνθρώπων ὀδαμῶ δηλήμονες, Euterpe, c. 74. Antiquity attributed to the Pſylli, a people of Africa, the extraordinary virtue of rendering themſelves invulnerable by ſerpents, as well as of curing thoſe who were bit by them. See Dr. Haſſelquiſt's voyages and travels, cited in the Monthly Review for February 1766, p. 133.

† Alnetan. Quæſt. l. 2. p. 155.

done; ſince it is not always eaſy to explain in what manner a common juggler impoſes upon our ſight. Should it be ſuggeſted, that Moſes might impoſe upon the ſight of the ſpectators as well as the magicians; I anſwer, that as he aſcribes their performances to legerdemain, and his own to God; ſo there might, and muſt have been a wide difference in their manner of acting; the *covered arts* of the magicians not being uſed by Moſes, the ſame ſuſpicion could not reſt on him as did on them. What an ingenious writer aſſerts is not true, that according to the Exodus, the outward appearance on both ſides was preciſely the ſame: for the book of Exodus ſpecifies a moſt important difference between the miracle of Aaron, and the impoſtures of the magicians. For it ſays, that "Aaron caſt down his rod, before Pha-"raoh, and before his ſervants, and it became a ſer-"pent." But with regard to the magicians it uſes very different language; for at the ſame time it ſays, "They caſt down every man his rod, and they be-"came ſerpents," it expreſsly declares that they did this by their "inchantments, or covered arts." And what in the moſt effectual manner prevented any apprehenſion, that the ſerpent of Aaron was (like thoſe of the magicians) the effect only of a dextrous management, not a miraculous production; God cauſed his rod to ſwallow up theirs: in which there was no room for artifice, and which, for this reaſon, the magicians did not attempt to imitate. This new miracle was not deſigned to eſtabliſh the ſuperiority of the God of Iſrael to the idols of Egypt; nor was it capable

capable of anſwering that end * : but in the view here given of it, had much wiſdom, by vindicating the credit of the former miracle †, (which might poſſibly be more open to ſuſpicion, than any of the reſt,) as well as by affording new evidence of a divine interpoſition in favour of Moſes. God conſidered this evidence as fully deciſive of the point in queſtion between his meſſengers and the magicians: for from this

* It was obſerved above, p. 309. that it is far from being evident, that the cauſing one ſerpent to ſwallow ſeveral, is a greater miracle than the actual creation of a number equal to thoſe ſwallowed.

† We learn from hence, how little occaſion there was for Moſes, to detect the artifices of the magicians; who did not ſo much as pretend to any peculiar divine aſſiſtance, and who ſunk into contempt of themſelves. 2 Tim. iii. 9. The nature of the works of Moſes, and the open unſuſpicious manner of their performance, ſerved ſufficiently to diſgrace the attempts of his rivals.——On the other hand, it is an inſuperable difficulty attending the common hypotheſis, that Moſes never intimated to Pharaoh, or the Egyptians, that the magicians performed their works by the aſſiſtance of the devil, (as without doubt he would have done, if that had been the caſe;) nor taught them to diſtinguiſh between diabolical and divine miracles; though on the common hypotheſis both appeared in ſeveral inſtances to be the very ſame. If the devil performed real miracles in ſupport of the magicians; it was the more neceſſary that Moſes ſhould have given expreſs notice of this, both to the Iſraelites and Egyptians; as the latter certainly had no ſuſpicion of this kind, and neither could learn any thing concerning the miraculous power of the devil, but by revelation. Moſes, however, inſtead of revealing this ſecret, has, (by deſcribing his rivals as magicians, and their works as impoſtures,) in effect, denied their being aſſiſted by the devil.

this time he proceeded to the *puniſhment* of Pharaoh and the Egyptians: which affords a new demonſtration, drawn from the juſtice of the divine Being, of the falſehood of the common hypotheſis, according to the repreſentation given of it by thoſe, who maintain, that the magicians were not plainly vanquiſhed, till they were reſtrained from turning the duſt into lice *. Had this been the caſe, it would have been right in Pharaoh to ſuſpend his judgment till that time; nor would God have puniſhed him by the two intervening plagues, that of turning the waters of the Nile (to which Egypt owed its fecundity) into blood, and covering the land with frogs: puniſhments ſo ſevere, as to imply the moſt criminal obſtinacy on the part of Pharaoh.

2. With regard to the next attempt of the magicians

* According to Mr. Hallet, (on miracles, p. 26, 34, 35.) the works of the magicians were *real miracles*, ſuch as argued the interpoſition of *oppoſite* inviſible powers to thoſe by which Moſes was aſſiſted; the three firſt miracles of Moſes did not appear to require more ſtrength for their performance, than thoſe of the magicians; and the ſpectators were in ſuſpence which ſide gained the victory, till the magicians were prevented from turning the duſt of the land into lice. Archbiſhop Tillotſon alſo, (on 1 John iv. 1. V. 1. p. 179. fol. ed.) after a thouſand other writers of inferior note, ſuppoſes the evidence till then to be equal on both ſides. But, is it poſſible, that the righteous judge of the world ſhould puniſh Pharaoh for not complying with his orders, before he had given him clear evidence that thoſe orders came from him, and while he could not but doubt whether they did come from him; if the being left in doubt did not itſelf create a ſuſpicion, that they could not come from him?

cians to imitate Moſes, who had already turned all the running and ſtanding waters of Egypt into blood *, there is no difficulty in accounting for their ſucceſs, in the degree in which they ſucceeded. For it was during the continuance of this judgment, when no water could be procured, but *by digging round about the river* †, that the magicians attempted, by ſome proper preparation, to change the colour of the ſmall quantity that was brought them; (probably endeavouring to perſuade Pharaoh, that they could as eaſily have turned a larger quantity into blood.) In a caſe of this nature, impoſture might, and, as we learn from hiſtory, often did, take place. It is related by Valerius Maximus ‡, that the wine poured into the cup of Xerxes was three times changed into blood. But ſuch trifling feats as theſe could not at all diſparage the miracle of Moſes; *the vaſt extent* of which raiſed it above the ſuſpicion of fraud, and ſtamped upon every heart, that was not ſteeled againſt all conviction, the ſtrongeſt impreſſion of its divinity. For he turned their ſtreams, rivers, ponds, and the water in all their receptacles, into blood. And the fiſh that was in the river (Nile) died, and the river ſtank ||.

3. Pharaoh not yielding to this evidence, God proceeded to farther puniſhments, and covered the whole land of Egypt with frogs. Before theſe frogs were

* Exod. vii. 20—25. † V. 24.

‡ L. i. c. 6.

|| Exod. viii. 1—7.

were removed *, the magicians undertook to bring (into ſome place cleared for the purpoſe) a freſh ſupply: which they might eaſily do, when there was ſuch plenty every where at hand. Here alſo the narrow compaſs of the work expoſed it to the ſuſpicion of being effected by human art; to which the miracle of Moſes was not liable; the infinite number of frogs which filled the whole kingdom of Egypt, (ſo that their ovens, beds, and tables ſwarmed with them,) being a proof of their immediate miraculous production. Beſides, the magicians were unable to procure their *removal* †, which was accompliſhed by Moſes, at the ſubmiſſive application of Pharaoh, and at the very time that Pharaoh himſelf choſe; the more clearly to convince him, that God was the author of theſe miraculous judgments, and that their infliction or removal did not depend upon the influence of the elements or ſtars, at ſet times, or in critical junctures.

4. The hiſtory of the laſt attempt of the magicians, confirms the account here given of all their former ones. Moſes turned all the duſt of the land into lice: and this plague, like the two preceding ones, being inflicted at the word of Moſes, and extended over the whole kingdom of Egypt, muſt neceſſarily

* Exod. viii. 6, 7, 8. Nor indeed can it be imagined, that after this or the former plague had been removed, that Pharaoh would order his magicians to renew either.

† Ch. viii. 8. Had they been able to *inflict* this plague *miraculouſly*, they might have *removed* it in the ſame manner.

ceſſarily have been owing, not to human art, but to a divine power. Nevertheleſs, the motives upon which the magicians at firſt engaged in the conteſt with Moſes, the ſhame of deſiſting, and ſome ſlight appearances of ſucceſs in their former attempts, prompted them ſtill to carry on the impoſture, and to try "with their inchantments to bring forth lice: "but they could not *." With all their ſkill in magic, and with all their dexterity in deceiving the ſpectators, they could not even ſucceed ſo far as they had done in former inſtances, by producing a ſpecious counterfeit of this work of Moſes. Had they hitherto performed real miracles, by the aſſiſtance of the devil; how came they to deſiſt now? It cannot be a greater miracle to produce lice, than to turn rods into ſerpents, water into blood, and to create frogs. It has indeed been very often ſaid, that the devil was now laid under *a reſtraint:* but hitherto no proof of this aſſertion has been produced. The Scripture is ſilent, both as to the devil's being now reſtrained from interpoſing any farther in favour of the magicians, and as to his having afforded them his aſſiſtance on the former occaſions. But if we agree with Moſes, in aſcribing to the magicians nothing more than the artifice and dexterity which belonged to their profeſſion; we ſhall find that their want of ſucceſs in their laſt attempt, was owing to the different nature and circumſtance of their enterprize. In all the former inſtances, the magicians knew beforehand what they were to undertake, and

* Exod. viii. 18.

had time for preparation. They were not ſent for by Pharaoh, till after Moſes had turned his rod into a ſerpent: and previous notice had been publicly given of the two firſt plagues *. But the orders in relation to the third, were no ſooner iſſued than executed, without being previouſly imparted to Pharaoh†. So that in this laſt caſe, they had no time for contriving any expedient for imitating or impeaching the act of Moſes. And had they been allowed time, how was it poſſible for them to make it appear, that they produced thoſe animals by which they themſelves, and all the country, were already covered ‡ and ſurrounded? Or, what artifice could eſcape detection, in relation to inſects, whoſe minuteneſs hinders them from being perceived, till they are brought ſo near as to be ſubject to the cloſeſt inſpection? Now therefore the magicians choſe to ſay, "This (laſt work of Moſes) is the finger of God ‖."

It has been generally thought, that the magicians here acknowlege, "that the God of Iſrael was "ſtronger than the gods of Egypt, who had hitherto "aſſiſted § them, but were now reſtrained from do-"ing

* Exod. vii. 15, 17. ch. viii. 1—4.

† Ch. viii. 16.

‡ V. 18. There "being lice upon man, and upon beaſt," ſeems to be aſſigned as a reaſon of the magicians being unable to counterfeit this miracle.

‖ V. 19.

§ Had the magicians, in the former trials, been aſſiſted by the gods of Egypt, (or any evil ſpirits who ſupported their cauſe;)

" ing it by his ſuperior power." But the text makes no mention of their allowing the God of Iſrael to be ſuperior to the gods of Egypt; much leſs of their admitting the former to be Jehovah, and the only true God. Nor do they refer to any ſupernatural reſtraint upon the Egyptian deities, but to the laſt miracle * of Moſes, when they ſay, " This is the finger of God;" or " of a god:" for the original word † admits this ſenſe, and very probably was uſed in no other by the magicians, who believed in a plurality of gods. Being unable to turn the duſt of the earth into lice, (and even to ſeem to do it,) they allow that this ſurpaſſed the ſcience they profeſſed, and argued the ſpecial miraculous interpoſition of ſome deity. There is no ſort of evidence, that this language of the magicians proceeded from a deſire of doing juſtice to the character and claims of the God of Iſrael; or that it was not merely deſigned as the

cauſe;) they might have imputed their miſcarriage in the trial under conſideration, to the omiſſion of ſome ceremony or incantation, judged neceſſary to engage their aſſiſtance. The diſappointments of the Pagan diviners were frequently accounted for in this manner, and their credit hereby ſaved. Nor was it difficult for idolaters to account for a diſparity of power between different gods; each god having his peculiar province, as was ſhewn above, p. 329.

* The Targum of Onkelos renders the words, " This plague comes from God." And the Arabic verſion expreſſes the ſame ſenſe, " A ſign of this nature is of God."

† Heb. Elohim.

beſt apology they were able to make for their own failure of ſucceſs, and to prevent Pharaoh from reproaching them with the want of ſkill in their profeſſion. Certain it is, that this declaration of the magicians had no good effect upon Pharaoh, but ſeems rather to be mentioned as an occaſion of his continued hardneſs *. Nay, the hiſtory plainly intimates, that the magicians themſelves afterwards confronted Moſes, till in puniſhment of their obſtinacy, they were ſmitten with ulcers ‡. I add, that the ſenſe here aſſigned to their language, is perfectly agreeable to the account before given of the ſtate of the controverſy between them and Moſes: for it implies, that the magicians had not ſo much as pretended to any miraculous interpoſition of the gods in their favour, but relied entirely upon the eſtabliſhed rules of their art; and conſequently that Pharaoh's view in ſending

* V. 19. After relating what the magicians ſaid to Pharaoh, the hiſtorian adds, "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them," that is, to Moſes and Aaron, (as clearly appears from the uſe of the ſame form of ſpeech, Exod. vii. 13, 22.) "as the Lord had ſaid." Its having been taken for granted, that Pharaoh is here reproved for not hearkening to his magicians, (who never perſuaded their monarch to releaſe the Iſraelites,) ſeems to have prevented critics from underſtanding the true meaning of the paſſage in queſtion, "This is the finger of God."

‡ "The magicians could not ſtand before Moſes, becauſe of the boil: for the boil was upon the magicians." Exod. ix. 11. Does not this imply, that till this time the magicians had, in ſome method or other, oppoſed or diſparaged Moſes?

ſending for them, was to enable himſelf to determine, whether the works of Moſes lay within the compaſs of it.

I cannot conclude this ſubject without obſerving, that the ſtrenuous but unſucceſsful oppoſition of the magicians to Moſes, added ſtrength to his cauſe; as it ſerved to manifeſt the divinity of his miracles, by clearing him from all ſuſpicion of magic. This art was thought equal to the moſt wonderful phenomena. In Egypt it was held in the higheſt eſteem, and carried to its utmoſt perfection. Pharaoh, without doubt, on the preſent moſt important and intereſting occaſion, engaged the aſſiſtance of the moſt able profeſſors of it, who, from a regard to their own reputation and intereſt, would try every poſſible method to invalidate the miracles of Moſes. Nevertheleſs, their utmoſt efforts were baffled; and the vanity and futility of the claims of magic were detected and expoſed: agreeably to the cenſure paſſed upon them by St. Paul. For, ſpeaking of certain perſons, whoſe oppoſition to genuine Chriſtianity was the ſole effect of their corrupt minds, without the leaſt colour of reaſon; he compares them to Jannes and Jambres *

* Jannes and Jambres, mentioned by St. Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 8. from the Chaldee paraphraſe on Exod. vii. 11. are ſuppoſed to have been the two chiefs of Pharaoh's magicians. Numenius, the Pythagorean philoſopher, (apud Euſeb. Præp. Ev. l. 9. c. 8.) ſays, "they are inferior to none in magic ſkill; "and for that reaſon choſen by common conſent to oppoſe "Muſæus," for ſo the Heathens called Moſes). See Le Clerc on Exod. vii. 12. and Pliny's Hiſt. l. 30. c. 1.

who withſtood Moſes; and did it, he muſt mean, with as little pretence; or there would be no juſtice in the compariſon. He adds, "Their folly was manifeſt unto all men *;" and thus he taxes the conduct of the magicians with the moſt glaring abſurdity. He cannot therefore be ſuppoſed to admit, that they imitated and equalled for a time the miracles of Moſes, and then deſiſted as ſoon as they found themſelves unable to continue the conteſt to advantage, (which would have been a point of prudence); but to aſſert, that they wickedly and abſurdly attempted to place the feats of art on a level with the undeniable operations of a divine power; and ſo ſhamefully miſcarrying in their undertaking, they expoſed themſelves to the contempt of thoſe, who had once held them in high veneration. We proceed to conſider,

SECT. II.

The Caſe of Samuel's Appearance to Saul at Endor.

1 Sam. xxviii.

I. AMONGST other deteſtable methods of divination practiſed by the ancient Pagans, one was their pretenſion of calling up and conſulting the dead †. The ſoul of man, when ſeparated from the

* 2 Tim. iii. 9.

† This cuſtom is referred to Iſ. viii. 19. ch. xxix. 4. ch. lxv. 3. A full account of it may be found in Lucan. l. 6. v. 591,

the body, was ſuppoſed to be cloathed with a material covering *, which retained the ſhape and lineaments of the body, and was capable of being ſeen and heard, though of two fine a contexture to be felt or handled. This *image* † or *ſhadow* was what the Heathens conceived they could raiſe by proper ſacrifices to the earth, to the dead, and to the infernal deities ‡. *Human victims* || were frequently offered up on theſe occaſions. At a time when the pretended art of raiſing up ghoſts was held in high eſteem §

v. 591, &c. Virgil. Æn. l. 6. Homer. Il. l. 23. Odyſſ. l. 10, 11. Statius's Thebaid, iv. v. 477. In Horace (epod. od. ult.) Canidia boaſts, Poſſim crematos excitare mortuos; and Medea, in Ovid, (Metam. l. 7. v. 199, &c.) that ſhe could command, manes exire ſepulchris. See likewiſe Herodotus, l. 5. c. 29. Heliodor. Æthiop. l. 5. p. 293. Joſeph. Antiq. l. 6. c. 14. § 2. Horace, Satir. l. 1. ſat. 8. v. 28, 29. And Tibullus, lib. 1. el. 2. v. 45, 46. where the pretenſions of ſorcereſſes are thus deſcribed,

Hæc cantu finditque ſolum, maneſque ſepulchris
Elicit, et tepido devocat oſſa rogo.

* Cic. Tuſc. Diſput. 1. 16.

† The Greeks called it, εἴδωλον; the Latins, ſimulachrum, imago, umbra.

‡ Homer. Odyſſ. Λ. 21, &c. Æſchyl. Perſ.

|| Servius on Virgil, Æn. l. 6. l. 107. and Patrick on Deut. xviii. 11.

§ Lucian de Aſtrol. 24. Homer makes Ulyſſes have recourſe to necromancy without any ſcruple; but in later and more enlightened ages, the magic arts becoming contemptible and odious, Virgil repreſents Dido as making an apology for uſing them. Æn. iv. 493.

in the Pagan world, and temples were erected where the ceremony of conjuration was to be performed *; Moſes, with the higheſt reaſon, branded it as a moſt atrocious crime, and puniſhed it with death †. Unhappily however this execrable ſuperſtition (as indeed almoſt all the other ſuperſtitions of Paganiſm) was too much countenanced by the Chriſtian converts, and particularly by the ancient Fathers, who univerſally aſcribed to magicians and necromancers the power of calling up the ſouls of the dead ‡. A blind deference to the authority of theſe writers, (whoſe faith was an unnatural mixture of Pagan and Chriſtian principles, not leſs oppoſite to one another than light and darkneſs,) has too long enſlaved the Chriſtian world, and hindered them from duly attending to the voice of reaſon, or what is taught in the ſacred writings. To this neglect we muſt aſcribe their embracing an opinion, ſo repugnant to the order of the natural world, and to the doctrines of revelation reſpecting the ſtate of the dead. Can it be conſiſtent with a juſt reverence of God, to believe, that he has ſubjected the ſouls of the departed to be remanded back

* Herodot. l. 5. c. 92. § 7. Pauſanius, Bœot. c. 30. Plutarch. Vit. Cimon. p. 482. We read, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. 2 Kings xxi. 6. that Manaſſes "dealt with a familiar ſpirit;" which, according to the LXX, imports, his eſtabliſhing the practice of conſulting the dead, and erecting temples for that purpoſe.

† Deut. xviii. 10, 11. Levit. xx. 27. See above, ch. 3. ſect 3. p. 189.

‡ Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 66.

back from their deſtined abodes, and compelled to reveal what he has ſeen fit ſhould be concealed; and this at the call of ſome of the vileſt mortals? Are even the moſt eminent ſaints and prophets doomed to ſuch diſhonour? And could Pagan prieſts and diviners acquire ſuch an extraordinary power over them, by the practice of the moſt execrable rites, and offering up the moſt inhuman ſacrifices? Surely natural reaſon confirms the ſuffrage of Scripture, when it brands the whole magic art, to which evocations of the dead, and all necromantic divinations appertain, as founded in impoſture *.

II. There are ſome who admit, that witches cannot diſturb the ſouls of good men, much leſs of prophets; who nevertheleſs are of opinion that theſe wretched women can cauſe "the devil to counterfeit the ſouls of the dead;" and that in the caſe before us, "an evil ſpirit appeared before Saul in the likeneſs of Samuel †." This is not advanced upon the teſtimony of reaſon or experience, or upon the authority of divine revelation; but in conformity to the wild fictions of the Platonic philoſophers ‡, invented to deceive the credulous, and to confirm their attachment to the worſhip of falſe gods. Suppoſe the

* See ch. 3. ſect. 3. p. 182.

† See Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 12.

‡ Porph. de Abſtinentia, l. 2. thus deſcribes certain fallacious ſpirits, Γένος ἀπαταλῆς φύσεως παντόμορφον καὶ πολύτροπον, ὑποκρινόμενον καὶ θεὺς, καὶ δαίμονας, καὶ ψυχὰς τεθνηκότων. Compare Iamblichus de Myſter. ſect. 3. c. 31.

the ſorcerers and diviners amongſt the Heathens had been able, by offering up ſacrifices to their infernal deities, and by other rites of necromancy, to cauſe evil ſpirits to aſſume the ſhape of dead men, and to appear with their full reſemblance before their former acquaintance: would not this deception, eſpecially when accompanied with true predictions, have ſupported idolatry as effectually, and done as much miſchief in the world, as a power of calling up the dead themſelves *? Beſides, the very apparition of a ſpiritual and incorporeal being, and the gift of prophecy, are real miracles, and as ſuch cannot take place, but by divine appointment; unleſs all the arguments hitherto offered on this point are inconcluſive. Laſtly, the hiſtorian calls the appearance to Saul, Samuel †; which he could not do with truth, if it was no other than the devil, who here appears, not as a tempter, but as a very ſevere reprover of impiety and wickedneſs.

III. Many learned men have maintained, that it was neither Samuel, nor an evil ſpirit, who now appeared to Saul; but that the whole was the work of human impoſture. In ſupport of this opinion, it may be pleaded, that the woman to whom Saul applied to call up Samuel, though ſhe is ſaid to have *a familiar ſpirit* ‡, and pretended to be able to call up the dead, and

* See above, ch. 3. ſect. 2. p. 165.

† 1 Sam. xxviii. 12.

‡ It was obſerved, ch. 3. ſect. 3. p. 186. note ‡, that the Hebrew word *ob*, and the plural *oboth*, is generally rendered by

and by their help to foretel future events; was merely a ventriloquiſt, one of thoſe who had the art of ſpeaking

by the LXX, ἐγγαστριμύθους, ventriloquiſts. In Iſ. xix. 3, it is rendered by them, τοὺς ἐκ τῆς γῆς φωνέντας, 'thoſe that ſpeak out of the earth.' I allow, that this art requires no evil ſpirit; nor had the woman whom Saul had conſulted the aſſiſtance of any. Nevertheleſs, as theſe ventriloquiſts pretended to be, and were thought to be, inſpired by thoſe who applied to them to call up the dead; our tranſlators had ſome ground for rendering the word *ob*, 'a familiar ſpirit.' Somewhat of this import, the word muſt have in the mouth of Saul, when he ſaid, "Seek "me a woman, that is miſtreſs of ob; Divine to me by ob," (1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 8.) and denote either 'a ſpirit of divination' in general, or a 'ſpirit by which (it was believed) ſhe could call up the dead.' Saul muſt ſuppoſe ſhe was agitated and ſwelled by ſome ſpirit. See Le Clerc on Levit. xix. 31. It appears from Plutarch, (De Defect. Orac. tom. 2. p. 414.) Suidas, (tom. 1. ad voc. ἐγγαστριμύθῳ, p. 667.) and Joſephus, (Antiq. l. 14. p. 354.) that thoſe who were antiently called *ventriloquiſts*, had afterwards the name of *pythoneſſes*; which implies a pretence to divination. *Python* is the word uſed by the Vulgate verſion, 1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 8. And Mr. Voltaire (in his Philoſophy of Hiſtory, ch. 35.) ſays, "It is ſtrange "that the word *Python*, which is Greek, ſhould be known to "the Jews in the time of Saul. Many learned men have con-"cluded from hence, that this hiſtory was not written, till the "Jews traded with the Greeks, after the time of Alexander." But in the original Hebrew no ſuch word as *Python* is uſed, (as Mr. Voltaire himſelf knew); but a term ſo remote in ſound from it as *ob*. And for the credit of learning one would hope, (what I really believe to be the caſe,) that Voltaire is the only learned man, who ever undertook to determine the date of a Hebrew book, from the uſe of a word in a Latin tranſlation, made many hundred years after it, and not to be found in the original. See Mr. Findlay's Vindication, p. 389.

ſpeaking with their mouths ſhut, ſo as to ſeem to ſpeak out of their bellies, and who could throw their voices as if they came out of the earth, or from other places: an art which muſt neceſſarily have been very ſerviceable to thoſe who counterfeited the anſwers of the dead. With regard to Saul; how eaſy muſt it have been to impoſe upon a man, whoſe reaſon had been ſo long diſturbed by jealouſy, and who was now ſunk into deſpair, by the invaſion of his enemies, and a ſenſe of his rejection by God? If he had been maſter of himſelf, would he have applied to a witch to raiſe up Samuel, and to extort from him the knowlege of futurity? or have expected God to anſwer him by a dead prophet, when he refuſed anſwering by the living; eſpecially as he knew God had forbidden the conſulting the dead? Saul came to the Pythoneſs *by night*: a ſeaſon the moſt proper for carrying on a fraud; and for this reaſon always * choſen for magical practices. Thoſe who ſupported any reputation in this profeſſion, as the woman applied to by Saul ſeems to have done, were perſons of great artifice, and of very extenſive intelligence †, ſo as very ſeldom to be ſtrangers to the character and ſituation of thoſe who came to conſult them. We are not therefore to be ſurprized at the ſagacity and addreſs of the witch at Endor. She either knew Saul by the advantage of his ſtature, or picked

* See either Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 8. or Le Clerc on v. 13. or Dr. Chandler's Life of David, V. 1. p. 241, 273.

† Le Clerc on 1 Sam. xxviii. 16.

picked out the ſecret from his attendants, or inferred it from his giving her a promiſe not of *ſecrecy*, (all that a private perſon could give,) but of *impunity* *, which Saul alone could make. When ſhe pretended to have brought up Samuel, Saul was not allowed to ſee him †, but received his account of the apparition from the woman herſelf, whoſe great fright was a mere artifice ‡. The queſtion which is put into the mouth of Samuel, "Why haſt thou diſquiet-"ed || me, to bring me up?" by acknowledging the efficacy of magic, and the power of this pythoneſs to diſturb his reſt, and to bring him into this world at her pleaſure, even againſt his own conſent, and therefore without a commiſſion from God; is highly abſurd in itſelf, and injurious to the character of this divine prophet. And though he is afterwards made to read Saul a very grave lecture, and to denounce his doom; yet ſhe ran no riſque by ſo bold an admonition

* V. 10. † V. 13, 14.

‡ It may however be objected, that if the woman had a mind to make Saul believe ſhe had raiſed Samuel, why ſhould ſhe *pretend* to be frighted at the ſight of him? at the ſight of the perſon whom Saul deſired, and ſhe undertook to raiſe? I allow, ſhe did not really expect to raiſe Samuel; nevertheleſs, as ſhe gave Saul this expectation, why did ſhe counterfeit ſurprize at (what it became her to appear to expect) the ſucceſs of her own art? To me it ſeems moſt probable, that her ſurpriſe was not feigned, but real, and as ſuch the hiſtorian repreſents it.

|| This is ſomewhat like the complaint of Atoſſa in the Perſæ of Æſchylus, v. 688.

monition and prediction; an oath in thoſe days being eſteemed ſo ſacred, that perſons readily ventured their lives upon its credit.

With regard to her prediction, concerning the death of Saul and his ſons, and the defeat of his army on *the morrow;* it has been affirmed by ſome, that it was not punctually accompliſhed; there being (in their opinion) more than a day from the time of its delivery to Saul's engaging the Philiſtines. And if by *to-morrow* *, the pythoneſs meant *the time to come;* the prophecy was vague and indeterminate, and juſtly liable to the ſuſpicion of impoſture. She knew the ſituation of public affairs, and that the armies of the Philiſtines and Iſraelites were ready to engage; ſhe clearly inferred the iſſue, from the ſuperior numbers of the enemy, from the deſpondency of Saul, and his rejection by God, and from the appointment of David to ſucceed him †. It ſeemed moſt

* The original word, *machar*, ſignifies 'the next day,' in the following paſſages, Exod. xvi. 23. ch. xxxii. 5. 1 Sam. ix. 16. ch. xix. 4. 1 Kings xix. 2. ch. xx. 6. 2 Kings vii. 1, 18. ch. x. 6. It means 'the time to come,' indefinitely, in Gen. xxx. 33. Exod. xiii. 14. Deut. vi. 20. Joſh. xxii. 24, 27, 28. compare Mat. vi. 34. The occaſion therefore on which this word is uſed muſt determine the meaning of it. And on this occaſion it muſt mean 'the next day,' or 'very ſhortly;' otherwiſe Samuel only affirms, that Saul and his ſons would 'in ſome future time' be numbered amongſt the dead. Compare 1 Sam. xi. 9, 10. And if the prophecy was not accompliſhed in this ſenſe, it was not delivered by the real Samuel, but one who perſonated him.

† 1 Sam. xv. 28. ch. xxiv. 21. ch. xxvi. 25.

moſt probable to her, that Saul and his ſons would not ſtain their characters by cowardice, and ſave their lives by a ſhameful flight. She might be diſappointed; but ſhe knew how to recover her credit in caſe ſhe loſt any, by imputing her deception to the omiſſion of ſome neceſſary ceremony or incantation. By the event it appeared, that ſhe was uncommonly fortunate in her conjectures. And the ſacred hiſtorian ſaw fit to record this very remarkable caſe, partly to ſhew how deſervedly Saul was rejected by God, and partly to guard the Iſraelites from giving too eaſy credit to the prophecies of Pagan diviners. This opinion, however, like the immediately foregoing one, contradicts the ſacred hiſtorian, who not only repreſents the pythoneſs as affirming, but himſelf affirms *, that *ſhe ſaw Samuel*, and that *Samuel ſpoke to Saul;* nor has he dropt the leaſt hint, that it was not the real Samuel of whom he was ſpeaking. I add, therefore,

IV. That there is an opinion concerning this matter different from the foregoing: and it is this, that the appearance of Samuel to Saul was a divine miracle; (though whether the miracle conſiſted in raiſing

* "And the woman ſaw Samuel," 1 Sam. xxviii. 12. "Samuel ſaid to Saul," v. 15. "Then ſaid Samuel," v. 16. Perhaps it may be objected, that the hiſtorian does not himſelf affirm, that the woman ſaw Samuel; and deſigned only to relate the account given by her, though he himſelf believed it to be falſe. But in this caſe, ought he not to have ſaid, the woman *pretended* to ſee Samuel? and that the *pretended* Samuel ſpoke to Saul?

ing Samuel, or in preſenting an image or repreſentation of him before Saul, it is not neceſſary to determine.) It ſeems to have been the opinion of the antient Jews *, that Samuel now appeared to Saul. And if this was the real caſe; the apparition muſt be aſcribed, not to the power of inchantment, but to the immediate appointment of God †, as a rebuke and puniſhment to Saul.

In ſupport of this opinion, it may be obſerved, that Saul came to the woman by night, when ſhe did not expect him, and was unprepared; and yet no ſooner had ſhe obtained from him a promiſe of ſafety, and learnt who the perſon was he wanted her to raiſe, than Samuel appeared; before ſhe had any time for juggle or artifice, or for the performance of the

* The author of the book of Eccleſiaſticus, ch. xlvi. 20, ſays, "After his death Samuel prophecied, and ſhewed the king his end." And the LXX, after relating the death of Saul for conſulting the witch, add, "and the prophet Samuel anſwered him," 1 Chron. x. 13. Joſephus likewiſe was in the ſame ſentiment, Antiq. l. 6. c. 14. ſect. 2.

† This opinion is maintained by Dr. Waterland, in his ſermons, V. 2. p. 267. and defended by Dr. Delany in his Life of David. The ſucceeding writer of the ſame life, the learned Dr. Chandler, has combated this opinion, and given new ſtrength to thoſe objections which had been raiſed againſt it. I have attempted to anſwer or obviate thoſe objections, except ſuch as do not affect the Scripture hiſtory of this matter; for the doctor lays a ſtreſs on ſuch, and particularly on Samuel's concealing himſelf "in a dark underground magic chamber of "a witch. But" (as the doctor obſerves on another occaſion) "this is not the hiſtory, but an addition to it."

the neceſſary ſacrifices and incantations. " Saul ſaid, " Bring me up Samuel. And the woman ſaw Sa- " muel, and cried *." The hiſtorian here affirms, " that the woman ſaw Samuel," not that ſhe *pretended* to ſee him, much leſs that ſhe *raiſed* him. And the language plainly implies, that ſhe ſaw him *immediately* † after Saul's requeſt. At this ſight, the text ſays, " ſhe cried with a loud voice," in the utmoſt ſurprize and terror ‡, having no expectation of ſeeing Samuel, and having no pretence for aſcribing his appearance to her own art, which ſhe had not ſo much as exerted. This (as a juſtly celebrated cri-

Y tic

* 1 Sam. xxviii. 11, 12.

† This is an important circumſtance. It is generally ſuppoſed, that ſome ſpace of time intervened between the requeſt of Saul, and the appearance of Samuel, ſo as to leave room for the uſe of magical rites; and that it was in the uſe of theſe rites that Samuel was raiſed. The Engliſh tranſlation favours this ſuppoſition, and Dr. Chandler all along argues upon it. And it is acknowleged, that he very ſucceſsfully ſhews, that it is very improbable, either that the witch ſhould raiſe up Samuel by the power of magic, or that God himſelf ſhould raiſe him up in her uſe of the magic art, eſpecially as Samuel did not expreſsly inform Saul, that his appearing to him was not owing to her, but God. But this reaſoning proceeds on a ſuppoſition wholly groundleſs; it does not appear that any magical rites were uſed, or that a moment's time intervened between Saul's requeſt and Samuel's appearance. The Engliſh tranſlators have inſerted the particle *when*, (" And when the woman ſaw Samuel,") without any authority from the original, and merely to favour their own prejudices.

‡ See above, p. 333. note ‡.

tic* obſerves) " ſeems to be a plain evidence that her *art* was a cheat; and that the reality, (which he calls *a likeneſs of Samuel*,) unexpected to *her*, was God's own extraordinary interpoſition." The ſorcereſs believing that Samuel could be ſent to no leſs a perſon than Saul; from the appearance of the former, ſhe concluded the latter was now preſent in diſguiſe: which naturally made her very uneaſy; as Saul had formerly cut off all thoſe of her profeſſion, and would now, ſhe feared, be excited by Samuel to renew his former ſeverity †. The king bade her not be afraid, and aſked what ſhe ſaw? It muſt be acknowleged, that this queſtion is a proof, that Saul did not himſelf ſee Samuel at firſt; but it ſeems pretty evident from the hiſtory, that he ſaw him afterwards. To Saul's queſtion the woman replied, *I ſaw gods* ‡, or *a god*, a perſon of a majeſtic form, or one in the habit of a judge or magiſtrate ||, *aſcending out of the earth*. The dead were

* Dr. Clarke, V. 2. p. 361. fol.

† " But why ſhould the witch be frightened, if ſhe had not uſed her magic arts?" She had acknowleged herſelf to be one that had a familiar ſpirit, and at Saul's deſire had actually engaged to raiſe up Samuel. And it is in this ſenſe ſhe ſays, ſhe had " obeyed Saul, and put her life into his hand." 1 Sam. xxviii. 21.

‡ 1 Sam. xxviii. 13.

|| That the word *elohim* is applied to judges and magiſtrates, cannot be denied. See Exod. xxii. 8, 9, 28. Pſ. lxxxii. 1, 6. Le Clerc and Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 13. Dr. Chandler, (in his Life of David, p. 239.) objects to the application of this

were thought to ſpeak out of the earth*, but Samuel *aſcended* and ſtood upon its ſurface in full view. Saul farther inquired, "What form is he of?" The woman replied, "An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle." What witches undertook to raiſe, was, the ghoſts of the dead; but the preſent appearance did not reſemble a mere ghoſt or ſhadow, and agrees beſt with the ſuppoſition of its being Samuel himſelf, or a miraculous repreſention of his perſon and habit. It is obſervable, that Samuel was now covered with *a mantle*, the very habit in which he was clad, when he denounced† that ſentence upon Saul, which he came now to confirm. While the woman was giving Saul this deſcription of the apparition, Samuel ſeems to have advanced forward within his ſight. For it is added, "And Saul perceived that it was Samuel himſelf‡," not merely from the deſcrip-

 tion

this plural term to a ſingle perſon; yet this term is applied to Moſes, Exod. vii. 1. as was obſerved above, p. 330. And it is certain that Saul did not underſtand the witch as ſpeaking of more than one perſon, for he aſks, "What is his form?" And ſhe explains her own meaning in the anſwer ſhe returns to this queſtion, "An old man ariſeth."

* Iſ. xxix. 4. ch. viii. 19.

† 1 Sam. xv. 27.

‡ The Engliſh tranſlators, in order to favour the vulgar ſuperſtition concerning the power of witches to raiſe ghoſts and ſpectres, have in this paſſage ſunk the word, *himſelf*; which ſeems to have been inſerted in the original, on purpoſe to diſtinguiſh this appearance or repreſentation of Samuel, from his ghoſt or ſhadow, over which alone the pythoneſs pretended to have any power.

tion given of him by the woman, and from the circumſtance of his appearing without her intervention, but by the evidence of his own ſenſes; otherwiſe why are we told, that "he ſtooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himſelf?" Is not this equivalent to telling us he ſaw Samuel*? Beſides, the converſation between Saul and Samuel is itſelf a ſtrong preſumption, that they were now in the preſence of each other.

This converſation was carried on in the abſence of the pythoneſs, who withdrew from a preſence ſhe little expected: for after the departure of Samuel, "the woman came to Saul†." The behaviour of Samuel agrees well with the ſuppoſition of there being, purſuant to a divine command, either a real appearance or miraculous repreſentation of this prophet of God. He begins with a ſevere reproof of Saul, "Why haſt thou *provoked*‡ me, to make (occaſion) me

* When David bowed to Jonathan, 1 Sam. xx. 41. and the man from Saul's camp bowed to David, 2 Sam. i. 2.; is it not hereby implied, that each ſaw the perſon who ſpoke to him? and yet this is not aſſerted in the text. Now, if it be allowed, that Saul ſaw the perſon who ſpoke to him; it will be impoſſible to deny the reality of Samuel's appearance, or of ſome miraculous repreſentation of him: ſo well known was he to Saul by his voice, lineaments, and ſtature.

† 1 Sam. xxviii. 21.

‡ This is the true rendering of the original word, which is derived from רגז. A very learned critic (Dr. Chandler, in his Life of David, p. 249.) is miſtaken in aſſerting, that "it never denotes *to provoke*, but to move and diſturb *by violence*." It

me to riſe up?" Here his riſing up is not aſcribed to the pythoneſs, or to her magic art; nor ſtrictly and properly to Saul, it being cuſtomary with the Hebrews to expreſs the *intention* by the *effect* *;) but to the prophet's *indignation* conceived againſt the king on account of his inquiring what to do, in a way ſo expreſsly forbidden by God; to the impoſſibility (as it were) of God's paſſing over ſo great an offence in ſilence. Accordingly, Saul's anſwer is manifeſtly an apology, and ſhews that he underſtood the prophet as reproving him, "I am ſore diſtreſſed; for "the Philiſtines make war againſt me, and God is "departed from me, and anſwereth me no more, "neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore "have I called thee †, that thou mayeſt make known "unto me what I ſhall do ‡."

It is uſed to deſcribe any violent commotion or concuſſion; (Job. ix. 6. ch. xxxvii. 2. If. v. 25. Amos viii. 8. Hab. iii. 7.) and hence is applied to the violent agitation of any paſſion, and of anger in particular. In Prov. xxix. 9. it is rendered, 'to rage;' in Ezek. xvi. 43. 'to fret;' (where the context requires a much ſtronger word, 'to provoke even to fury;') in If. xxviii. 21, 'to be wroth;' in Job xii. 6. 'to provoke.' See likewiſe Hab. iii. 2. If. xxxvii. 28, 29. Job xxxix. 24. where the noun derived from this verb is tranſlated *rage*. It cannot therefore be inferred from the uſe of this word, that Samuel was *forcibly compelled* to appear on this occaſion.

* See above, ch. 4. ſect. 1. p. 312. note ||.

† This language of Saul does not imply, that he had invoked Samuel; it expreſſes only his deſign in applying to the witch.

‡ 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

Samuel, in his reply, firſt of all expoſes the abſurdity of Saul's conduct in applying to him, when he found himſelf abandoned by God; then explains to him the true grounds of his deſertion, and of the preſent diſtreſſed ſituation of his affairs; and laſtly denounces farther judgments againſt him, as a puniſhment of the guilt he was at that very time contracting. "Wherefore then doeſt thou aſk" (direction and aſſiſtance) "of me, ſeeing Jehovah is "departed from thee, and is become thine enemy, "or, is with thine enemy*? And Jehovah hath "done (or, *will do*) to him, (viz. Saul's rival or "enemy) as he ſpake by me:" that is, "prone "as you were to doubt of the truth of thoſe threat-"nings which God uttered againſt you by my mouth, "they are now ready to be accompliſhed: for Je-"hovah has rent the kingdom out of thine hand, "and given it to thy neighbour, even David: be-"cauſe thou obeyedſt not the voice of Jehovah, nor "executed his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore "has Jehovah done this thing unto thee this day. "Moreover, Jehovah will alſo deliver Iſrael, with "thee, into the hands of the Philiſtines: and to-"morrow ſhalt thou and thy ſons be with me," (in the ſtate of death, or of ſeparate ſpirits†.) "Jehovah "ſhall

* Thus the laſt clauſe of the 16th verſe may be rendered; and the meaning is, as Vatablus obſerves, "Jehovah favours thine enemy." This gives an eaſy ſenſe to the firſt clauſe of the 17th verſe, "And Jehovah has done" (or will do) "to him," viz. to thine enemy, &c.

† Probably this is all that Samuel meant by telling Saul, "he

" ſhall alſo deliver the hoſt of Iſrael into the hands " of the Philiſtines." Is this the language of an artful impoſtor, whoſe buſineſs it was to flatter and delude the king, to ſoothe his diſtreſs, and gain his favour, and thereby procure from him a larger gratuity? Or if, from a regard to the credit of her art, ſhe did not chuſe to raiſe his hopes; why did ſhe ſtrive to provoke his reſentment, by the freedom of her reproofs, and the denunciation of the moſt dreadful judgments? There is a *keenneſs* and *aſperity* in this anſwer, abſolutely inconſiſtent with the leaſt regard to her own intereſt or ſafety; and not to be accounted for on the ſuppoſition of its proceeding from a perſon of art and addreſs under the circumſtances of this forcereſs. Indeed the very ſoul of Samuel ſeems to breathe in theſe expreſſions of diſpleaſure againſt the diſobedience and wickedneſs of Saul.

But it is objected, " that this could not be the " language of the real Samuel, becauſe he has not " expreſſed any diſapprobation of Saul for having " recourſe to the arts of divination, which were ſo " offenſive to God: and that it was unworthy of " God to raiſe up Samuel from the dead, only to " confirm a former ſentence againſt Saul, which " was declared irrevocable." The former ſentence

" he ſhould be with him." So that there is here no neceſſary reference to the antient opinion of the Pagans, that the ſhades dwelt together according to their tribes and families; Homer. Odyſſ. Λ; nor any aſſurance given him of happineſs in a future ſtate, though ſome who ſuffer the judgments of God in this world, are objects of his forgiveneſs in the next; 1 Cor. xi. 32.

againſt Saul did not affect his life, but his crown only; nor was the time fixed for the execution of this ſentence. Saul was ſpared, and even permitted to reign over Iſrael, till the commiſſion of this new crime of conſulting the witch; which the author of the book of Chronicles aſſigns particularly as the ground of his death, though not excluſively of his former diſobedience: "So Saul died for his tranſ-"greſſion which he committed againſt the Lord, "even againſt the word of the Lord, which he kept "not; and alſo for aſking counſel of one that had a "familiar ſpirit, to inquire of it *." And it is evident from the language of Samuel, that, beſides confirming the former ſentence, he denounced new and moſt terrible judgments againſt Saul, and againſt his family and forces; and for no other reaſon that appears, but the crime he was at this time committing. It is farther objected, "that Samuel dexterouſly a-"voided an anſwer to Saul's principal inquiry," and that his language "has all the air of evaſion and artifice †." Saul wanted to be informed by Samuel, how he was to act in his preſent critical ſituation, or how he might extricate himſelf from the danger which then threatened him. And Samuel, inſtead of having recourſe to any evaſion or artifice "to extricate himſelf from the" (pretended) "difficulty and neceſſity of giving Saul the advice he wanted;" gave him plainly to underſtand, that it was too late to apply for

* 1 Chron. x. 13.

† Dr. Chandler's Life of David, V. 1. p. 251, 252.

for any ſuch advice as he aſked; his doom being already ſealed, and his ſentence on the point of being carried into execution.

Though Samuel's prophecy is called by ſome an eaſy conjecture; yet it ſeems to argue a foreſight more than human. Samuel diſtinctly foretold the following remarkable particulars. Firſt of all, the death of Saul. And, was it certain that Saul would not ſhun an engagement, when he was ſo dejected, and had been in ſo remarkable a manner fore-warned of his danger? and that he would even ruſh on his deſtruction? Secondly, Samuel farther foretold the death of Saul's *ſons*. And who but God could certainly foreſee that Saul's three ſons, who endeavoured to ſave themſelves by flight, ſhould nevertheleſs periſh by the ſword of the enemy? Thirdly, Samuel foretold, that, together with Saul, God would deliver up Iſrael, the army and people of Iſrael, into the power of their enemies, and that their camp ſhould be taken, which made it the more difficult to bring a new army into the field, and expoſed their country to the inroads of the Philiſtines *. Laſtly, the exact time

* The laſt clauſe of the 19th verſe is not, what it is commonly made to be, a bare repetition of the firſt clauſe. By *Iſrael* in the firſt clauſe, we are to underſtand the army (including the people) of Iſrael; (compare v. 4. and ch. xxxi. 1.) and by the *hoſt* of Iſrael in the laſt clauſe, is meant more eſpecially their *camp;* the loſs of which preventing them from bringing a new army into the field, "the Philiſtines came and dwelt in" ſeveral of "the cities" which belonged to the Iſraelites. 1 Sam. xxxi. 7.

time is determined, when theſe events were to happen, which was the very next day. Accordingly, within this ſpace of time, the ſeveral parts of this prediction received a punctual accompliſhment. The prophecy therefore ſeems to argue an unerring and divine preſcience *.

But here it may be aſked, " Is it likely, that God " ſhould refuſe to anſwer Saul, when he conſulted " him in ways appointed by himſelf, and yet ſhould " anſwer him in a forbidden way; and hereby fa- " vour and encourage necromantic divinations, when " he had expreſsly ordered thoſe who practiſed them " to be puniſhed with death?" Saul having been rejected by God for his ſtubborn diſobedience to the divine orders, had no right to aſk or expect his *direction* and *preſervation* in his preſent danger; nor could God have granted it, conſiſtently with his deſign of preparing the way for the advancement of David to the throne of Iſrael. For this reaſon, God did not anſwer

* Thoſe, inſtead of falſifying, do really confirm the truth of this prediction, who object, " that Saul hardly returned " to his camp early enough in the morning after he had con- " ſulted the witch, or in ſufficient ſpirits to prepare for the " battle that day, which therefore muſt have been fought the " day after." For what would be with us the *ſecond* day after the night in which Saul conſulted the witch, was the morrow or *next* day with the Jews, who reckoned from ſun-ſet to ſun-ſet; and conſequently included what we ſhould call the next day, in the natural day on which he was at Endor. Nay, if the prophecy was not delivered till after midnight, *we* ſhould not underſtand by to-morrow any part of the day which was begun.

ſwer him in ways of his own appointment. Nor did he afterwards anſwer him in a forbidden way; but (if the explication here given of this hiſtory be juſt) interpoſed previouſly to the uſe of magic rites, and on purpoſe to reprove Saul for having recourſe to them, and to pronounce upon him the ſentence of death for this very crime at the inſtant he was committing it; and thus to teſtify the divine diſpleaſure againſt it. How this could encourage the uſe of necromancy, or indeed how God could more effectually diſcourage that moſt deteſtable art; I am not able to conceive. The method of God's proceeding on this occaſion, ſeems very conformable to what he had been pleaſed to do before, in other caſes of a like nature. When the king of Moab had recourſe to ſorceries, God himſelf interpoſed, and ſo over-ruled the mind of Balaam, that he was compelled to bleſs thoſe whom Balak wanted him to curſe *. And when king Ahaziah ſent to conſult Baalzebub about his recovery, God by his prophet Elijah ſtopt his meſſengers, reproved their maſter, and denounced his death †. And why might not God in like manner interpoſe in the caſe of Saul, in order to diſappoint his hopes of divine protection, and to denounce his doom; the foreknowlege of which had ſo great an effect upon him, that he inſtantly fell down into a ſwoon, and could no longer bear up againſt the bitter agonies of his mind? What is there in this conduct,

* Numb. xxiii.

† 2 Kings i. 2—4.

duct inconſiſtent with the juſtice or ſanctity of the great Governor of the world? Could Saul complain of being ſentenced to die for having recourſe to thoſe impious arts, the exerciſe of which he himſelf had heretofore puniſhed with death? How proper was it, that his death ſhould *appear* to be the puniſhment of his guilt? His death, if it had not been foretold, would have been conſidered as a common event, rather than as the execution of the divine diſpleaſure. He had certainly diſregarded the threatenings of God to depoſe him, and to appoint David in his ſtead; and very probably he had taken occaſion from his ſuſpending their execution, to turn them into ridicule. Finding that he continued in the full poſſeſſion of his kingdom, many years after Samuel had foretold it ſhould be taken from him; he might aſcribe the prediction to the diſaffection and enmity of the prophet, and his attachment to David. To clear the character of Samuel from all ſuſpicion, and vindicate the credit of his predictions; to evidence the divine deſignation of David to the throne of Iſrael; and in the moſt affecting manner to diſplay the righteous vengeance of God againſt the practice of necromantic divinations, by which Saul had now filled up the meaſure of his guilt; ſeems to have been the deſign of God in this miraculous appearance of his prophet.

I have now laid before the reader what occurred to me upon this difficult ſubject; and ſupported in the ſtrongeſt manner I was able, from the reaſonings of others, and my own reflections, the two different explications of it which carry with them the greateſt appearance

appearance of probability. I pretend not to decide which explication is true. Neither of them countenances the opinion, that miracles are performed by evil ſpirits; which is all I contend for. That which was propoſed laſt, ſeems to me the beſt ſupported; though on this, as on every other point, I leave every one to form his own judgment.

The caſe of the devil's appearing to our Saviour in the wilderneſs, and tranſporting or accompanying him from one place to another, and ſhewing him all the kingdoms of the world; would naturally fall next under our conſideration. But if the explication I have elſewhere given of this hiſtory, be juſt; it is no exception to the principle we have hitherto been endeavouring to eſtabliſh. In confirmation of that explication, I would obſerve, that if it be true, that the Scripture appropriates all miracles to God; then the common interpretation of our Saviour's temptations, which aſcribes ſo many miracles to the devil, muſt be falſe.

We have now examined the ſenſe of revelation concerning the author of miracles; produced many arguments to ſhew, that the Scriptures repreſent them as works peculiar to God, and attempted to ſolve the ſeveral objections againſt this account. The number and eminence of thoſe Chriſtian writers, who have taught, that the Scriptures allow to evil ſpirits a miraculous power, and the uſe made of that doctrine by unbelievers, in ſapping the foundation of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations, together with the nature and importance of the ſubject itſelf, will excuſe the compaſs

compaſs with which it has been treated. I will add, that deiſts ſhould not avail themſelves of the errors of Chriſtians, which are arguments only againſt the perſons who advance them, not againſt their religion. And even for them much allowance will be made by thoſe, who conſider, that the opinion entertained at preſent concerning the miraculous power of evil ſpirits, prevailed very generally amongſt the ancient Heathens and Jews; was early engrafted into the Scriptures themſelves, by falſe tranſlations of them; and during the triumph of popery was deemed an eſſential article of the Chriſtian faith. For how many ages were men prevented, by their prejudices, from underſtanding the volume of nature, as well as that of revelation? At the revival of learning, and the glorious era of the Reformation, when men began to recover the uſe of their underſtandings, and to apply the true rules of criticiſm to the ſtudy of the Scriptures; they at the ſame time began to call in queſtion the empire of Satan over the natural world. Luther aboliſhed the practice of exorciſms, and many others no longer gave credit to idle ſtories of faſcinations and magic. Much was then done to clear revelation from various corruptions which had been introduced into it. "And much" (ſays one of the moſt capable judges * of the ſubject) "ſtill remains to be done." No empire ſo durable as that of error and

* Dr. Lowth, biſhop of Oxford, in his ſermon at the viſitation of the biſhop of Durham, p. 24.

and prejudice over the human mind; and it may ſtill require a length of ages totally to ſubvert it. In the mean time, no one can complain of the obſcurity of the Scriptures, in any neceſſary article of faith or practice.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

SHEWING THAT MIRACLES, CONSIDERED AS DIVINE INTERPOSITIONS, ARE A CERTAIN PROOF OF THE DIVINITY OF THE MISSION AND DOCTRINE OF A PROPHET. THE ADVANTAGES AND NECESSITY OF THIS PROOF IN CONFIRMING AND PROPAGATING A NEW REVELATION. MIRACLES USEFUL IN REVIVING AND ESTABLISHING THE PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL RELIGION.

HITHERTO we have been endeavouring to prove, that miracles require an immediate act or order of God, and are his peculiar works. We are now to shew, what is a necessary consequence from this principle, that these works, when properly applied, are a divine testimony to the person on whose account they are wrought, and to that doctrine or message which he delivers in the name of God. It was for the sake of this important conclusion, that we undertook to prove in the preceding chapters, by arguments drawn both from reason and revelation, that miracles are divine interpositions.

Miracles may be performed by God, without the intervention of men; and for other purposes, besides that of attesting the mission of a prophet. Nor can they serve as testimonials to a prophet, but under such circumstances, as point out a relation between those works

works and his miſſion. If it does not clearly appear, that they are wrought at his inſtance, or in his favour; they will not be known to bear any more relation to him, than to any other perſon. Equally neceſſary is it, that the prophet ſhould expreſsly aſſert his miſſion from God, explain its purport, and allege his miracles in proof of it; that their true intention may neither be overlooked nor miſtaken, as the miracle of St. Paul at Lyſtra was at firſt by the Lycaonians *, through their inattention to the doctrine which he preached. If miracles are not declared to be ſigns of a divine miſſion; they cannot be intended, nor ought to be regarded as ſuch. It ſeems likewiſe to be farther requiſite, that the perſon who claims a divine commiſſion, and appeals to miracles in proof of it, ſhould explain this commiſſion, and deliver his meſſage, when going to perform his miracles, or while he continues to perform them; that he may not apply them, nor be ſuſpected of applying them to a wrong purpoſe; and that the connexion between them, and the point to be proved by them, may be the more readily diſcerned, and ſenſibly felt.

But miracles, if they argue a divine interpoſition, muſt be eſteemed divine credentials, under the following circumſtances: when it clearly appears, that they are wrought at the inſtance, or in favour, of a perſon, who claims a miſſion from God, delivers a meſſage in his name, and appeals to theſe works, before or during the time of their performance, in proof of the divinity of his miſſion and doctrine. The works

* Acts xiv. 11.

having God for their author, muſt, in this caſe, be conſidered as a declaration of his will, as his immediate anſwer to the appeal that had been made to him, as the ſigns or teſtimonies of his approbation of the perſon claiming a miſſion from him, and profeſſing to reveal his will. In this method God may be ſaid to ſeal his commiſſion, and to teſtify his approbation of the purport of it; juſt as we teſtify our aſſent to what another ſpeaks in our name, by ſome particular token; or make what is contained in a writing, though not drawn up by ourſelves, our own act and deed, by ſetting our hand and ſeal to it. It is evident, that miracles, in the caſe here ſuppoſed, prove the divinity of *the doctrine*, as well as of the miſſion of the perſon employed in publiſhing it to the world; or God's approbation of him, both in aſſerting and executing his commiſſion. It is ſcarce neceſſary to add, that if divine interpoſitions in favour of a perſon claiming a commiſſion from God, prove the *divinity* of his doctrine, they likewiſe prove its *truth* *. For it is impoſſible, as all men will allow, that God ſhould affix his ſeal to a lie †; or bear an immediate teſtimony

* To the prophet who had raiſed up her ſon to life, the woman of Sarepta ſaid, "Now by this I know thou art a man of "God, and that the word of the Lord by thy mouth is truth." 1 Kings xvii. 24. This is the language of nature and common ſenſe.

† Κομιδῇ ἄρα ὁ Θεὸς ἁπλῶν καὶ ἀληθὴς, ἔν τε ἔργῳ καὶ ἐν λόγῳ. Καὶ οὔτε αὐτὸς μεθίσταται, οὔτε ἄλλῳ ἐξαπατᾷ, οὔτε κατὰ φαντασίας, οὔτε κατὰ λόγους, οὔτε κατὰ σημείων πομπὰς, οὔθ' ὕπαρ' οὐδ' ὄναρ. Plat. Republ. l. 2. p. 431. ed. Ficini.

teſtimony in favour of one, who either falſely claims a divine commiſſion, or is unfaithful in the execution of it. God is too wiſe to be deceived himſelf, too juſt and too good to deceive his creatures.

This is the manner in which miracles, ſuppoſing them to be divine interpoſitions, furniſh out a concluſive proof of the truth and divine original of a ſupernatural revelation. Before we proceed to conſider the advantages of this proof, it will be neceſſary to take notice of the different manner in which the argument is ſtated by other writers.

1. By the adverſaries of revelation it has been aſſerted, "that miracles, of themſelves, are proofs only "of *power*, without having any relation to the *doc-* "*trine* of the performer." Nay, the advocates of revelation *, though they think "that miracles di- "rectly prove the *commiſſion* of the perſon who does "them to proceed from him, by whoſe power alone "they could be performed;" yet maintain, "that "miracles cannot prove *the truth* of any doctrine," and that "there is *no connexion* between any miracles "and doctrines." If miracles, in themſelves, prove only the interpoſition of ſome ſuperior being; it muſt be difficult, we allow, to diſcern any connexion between theſe works and the truth of doctrines. But it has been ſhewn, that theſe works are proofs of a *divine* power and interpoſition; and therefore, under proper circumſtances, divine teſtimonials to a pro-

* See Bp. Sherlock's Diſcourſes, V. 1. p. 289, 290. and V. 2. p. 10.

phet; teſtimonials to his doctrine as well as to his miſſion. If he declares himſelf to be ſent from God, to deliver a meſſage in his name, or to teach a new doctrine; and performs and appeals to miracles in proof both of his miſſion and doctrine; will not the miracles (ſuppoſing them to be divine works) equally prove the divinity of both? Indeed, his doctrine is included in his commiſſion, and what God principally intended to atteſt. And if the miracles prove the *divinity* of his doctrine, they muſt prove its *truth*; unleſs proving it to be from God, be no proof that it is true. According to this ſtate of the caſe, there is a very ſtrict connexion between miracles, and the truth of doctrines *. Agreeably hereto, we find that the prophets of God, both under the Old Teſtament and the New, at the ſame time that they aſſerted their divine miſſion, explained the particular object of it, or the purpoſe for which they were ſent: and that they urged their miracles as immediate divine teſtimonies to their meſſage or doctrine †, as well as to their miſſion. Nor can we have any higher evidence of the truth and certainty of any doctrine, than the immediate atteſtation of God to it.——If ſome

* It might have been added, that miracles may be of ſuch a nature as to exemplify, as well as to atteſt, the doctrine of a prophet. But this connexion between doctrines and ſuch miracles as are proper ſamples of thoſe doctrines, could not be taken notice of here; as we are now conſidering miracles only in their moſt general view, as divine interpoſitions.

† John xiv. 10, 11. Mark xvi. 20. Acts xiv. 3. See above, ch. 3. ſect. 6. p. 266.

ſome have contracted the uſe of miracles within too narrow limits; others, running into the oppoſite extreme, have ſtretched it too far. For,

2. Miracles have been urged, to prove the univerſal and perpetual inſpiration of the perſons who performed them. By ſome learned writers it has been aſſerted *, that "we may be rationally aſſured, that "a prophet is ſent of God; BEFORE we have "heard one word of his doctrine;" and ſuppoſed †, that all the miracles of a prophet may be performed firſt, and his doctrine be delivered afterwards. In proof of this point, they appeal firſt to the miracles of Moſes in Egypt, and at the Red Sea; which they allege, proved Moſes to be *an oracle*, and would have proved the divinity of all the doctrines and precepts he afterwards delivered, even if Moſes had performed no other miracles ‡. Whereas the ends propoſed, or the doctrines to be proved by the miracles of Moſes in Egypt, were diſtinctly ſtated *before* ‖ the works were performed. Thoſe ends were, not the proving Moſes to be an oracle, or a divine lawgiver to the Iſrael-

 ites,

* By Mr. Hallet on miracles, p. 57, 61, 63. and Dr. Benſon, in his life of Chriſt, ch. 6. ſect. 6. p. 224.

† Dr. Benſon, p. 225, 228, &c.

‡ P. 229.

‖ "Aaron ſpake all the words which Jehovah had ſpoken "unto Moſes, and (then) did the ſigns in the ſight of the "people." Exod. iv. 29, 30. In like manner Moſes and Aaron delivered their meſſage to Phaorah, before they proved their miſſion by miracles. Exod. v. 1.

ites, but the effecting their deliverance out of Egypt, the exemplary puniſhment of oppreſſion and idolatry, and the manifeſtation of the true God to the world *. Nor was it upon this evidence, but upon the evidence of the miracles wrought afterwards in the wilderneſs, that the Iſraelites received Moſes as a divine lawgiver, whoſe authority God continued to ſupport by a ſeries of miracles, even after all his doctrines and precepts were delivered. The learned writers † next appeal to the miracles wrought by St. Paul at Philippi; though we read of his *preaching* ‡ there ſome conſiderable time before we have any account of his working miracles. Theſe ingenious gentlemen all along argue on the ſuppoſition, that the miracles of a prophet are a general aſſurance, that we may ſafely truſt him as an oracle ||, and depend upon all he ſays as long as he lives §: a ſuppoſition altogether groundleſs, and of a like nature with that on which the unhappy man ſeems to have proceeded, who was ſlain by a lion, for giving too haſty credit to a prophet ¶.

Hardly any thing has done more prejudice to revelation, than the miſapplication of its miracles to purpoſes they were never intended to anſwer. What has

* See above, ch. iii. ſect. 5.

† Dr. Benſon, p. 230. Mr. Hallet, p. 63.

‡ Acts xvi. 14—18.

|| Mr. Hallet, p. 41, &c.

§ Dr. Benſon, p. 224, 230.

¶ 1 Kings xiii.

has furniſhed infidelity with more objections *, and occaſioned ſo much perplexity to ſincere Chriſtians; as mens maintaining that a prophet who has once performed miracles, is thereby rendered for ever incapable of error and vice †; and their building articles of faith on his private opinions with reſpect to ſubjects

* Mr. Voltaire, in his Treatiſe on Toleration, ſays, "that "Jephtha's declaration, (Judges xi. 24.) who was inſpired by "God, is at leaſt an evident proof, that God permitted the "worſhip of Chemoſh." But this writer miſrepreſents the meaning of Jephtha, who is only arguing with idolaters upon their own principle, that all nations had a right to keep what their gods had enabled them to poſſeſs: which is very different from allowing the divinity and worſhip of Chemoſh. Nor was Jephtha inſpired when he ſpoke the words here referred to. "The Spirit of the LORD came upon him" afterwards, (Judges xi. 29.) inciting him to undertake, and enabling him to accompliſh, the deliverance of the Iſraelites. Can it be inferred from hence, that whenever he ſpoke it was by divine inſpiration?

† An opinion repugnant to the expreſs declarations of revelation. Mat. vii. 22, 23. Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. See alſo Acts xxiii. 5. ch. xv. 12, 39. Gal. ii. 11, 14. When our Saviour ſays, Mark ix. 39. "No man, who ſhall do a miracle in my "name, can lightly (ταχὺ, quickly) ſpeak evil of me;" he means, that it ought not to be ſuppoſed concerning any perſon, who had ſo great faith in him, as to undertake and perform miracles in a dependance upon his divine power, that he was at that time diſpoſed to revile and blaſpheme him. This faith, however, did not always govern mens lives. For to ſome, "who did many wonderful works in the name of Chriſt, he "will ſay, I never knew (or approved) you." The eleven apoſtles, while their minds were darkened by many prejudices, and even Judas, wrought miracles:

jects not included in his commiſſion, and with regard to which he might think and ſpeak like all other men?

All the prophets of God did not perform their miracles with one view, nor were their commiſſions of the ſame extent. The commiſſion of ſome was limited to one particular purpoſe or ſeaſon; that of others was more general and laſting. Each clearly ſtated the diſtinct and ſpecial purpoſes of his own miſſion and miracles; and *always* declared what thoſe purpoſes were, *before* he performed his miracles, or (which is the ſame thing) before he ceaſed to perform miracles. And the miracles were deſigned to atteſt his commiſſion, and the purpoſes of it, in their juſt extent, as explained by the prophet himſelf, during the time that the miraculous teſtimony was borne to him. On this plan, no inconvenience could poſſibly enſue from the errors of a prophet, on ſubjects foreign to his commiſſion; nor even from his acting afterwards contrary to his own convictions, with reſpect to the ſubject of his commiſſion; or on any other occaſion. The evidence of Chriſt's divine authority, ariſing from miracles performed by thoſe who afterwards revolted from the faith or practice of Chriſtianity, was not impaired by that revolt. Nor did the culpable timidity of Peter, in withdrawing himſelf from the ſociety of the Gentile Chriſtians, that he might not give offence to the Jews, weaken thoſe proofs of the exemption of the former from the obligation of circumciſion, which aroſe from the ſpecial miracles by which it was confirmed, in the caſe of Cornelius and other uncircumciſed Gentiles. In a word,

word, miracles muſt not be extended beyond their proper uſe, nor applied to any other purpoſes, than what the nature of the works themſelves, or the declarations of the performer, will warrant. Miracles are the teſtimony of God himſelf, to a perſon profeſſing to deliver a meſſage from him; a proof of the divine original of his miſſion and doctrine. But we are to receive as divine upon this evidence, no other doctrines, than thoſe it was deſigned to confirm.

Having attempted to ſhew, under what circumſtances miracles, conſidered as divine interpoſitions, are a certain proof of doctrines; I proceed to point out the advantages of this proof, particularly in introducing and eſtabliſhing a revelation from God. We ſhall ſtill argue on the ſuppoſition of miracles being divine works; though, after what has been urged above, it muſt be unneceſſary at every turn to ſhew, that the argument concludes only on this ſuppoſition.

I. The proof from miracles of the divine commiſſion and doctrine of a prophet, is, in itſelf, deciſive and *abſolute*. What reaſoning can be more concluſive than this, "He that does ſuch works as no man "can do, unleſs God be with him, muſt be ſent of "God, and faithfully publiſh his will to the world?" The God of truth cannot bear an immediate teſtimony to any one as a divine meſſenger, whom he has not ſent, or who publiſhes his own inventions as the oracles of heaven. No man was ever ſo abſurd as to maintain, that atteſtations properly divine can deceive us, or that God would immediately interpoſe in ſupport of falſe claims. And this proof of a di-

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vine commiſſion from the credentials we are now ſpeaking of, is full and ſufficient, without taking into conſideration the doctrine they atteſt. The proof ariſes out of the nature of the miracles, independent of every thing elſe. This fully vindicates the conduct of the prophets of God, who, as was ſhewn above *, demanded the immediate aſſent and regard of mankind to their divine commiſſion, upon the ſole evidence of their miracles, and prior to all reaſonings concerning the natural propriety and fitneſs of their doctrine. It was only by ſuch works, as were ſure tokens of a divine miſſion, that it was poſſible for them to overcome the objections and corrupt prejudices of mankind againſt their meſſage. Had Moſes told Pharaoh, or Chriſt the Jews †, "that before the evi- "dence of miracles was admitted, as a proof of a di- "vine commiſſion, the *matter* of that commiſſion "muſt be examined by mens natural notions, and "be made appear to be conformable to them;" the miracles of theſe divine prophets would have produced only endleſs debates, inſtead of conviction. But the evidence of their miſſions from theſe works, was in itſelf (as it was neceſſary it ſhould be) deciſive and abſolute.

To what is here advanced, ſome may object, "that "if doctrines are to be received as coming from "God, upon the bare atteſtation of miracles, with- "out regard to the nature of the doctrines them- "ſelves;

* Ch. 3. ſect. 6.

† See p. 396.

" ſelves; we may then be obliged, under the ſanc-
" tion of theſe works, to receive the moſt abſurd and
" immoral doctrines, and there can be no poſſible
" guard againſt impoſture." This objection ſuppoſes, that doctrines immoral and abſurd may receive the ſanction of miracles: a ſuppoſition which ought not to be made; becauſe miracles are works peculiar to God, and it is impoſſible for God to lie. The principle on which we here argue, that miracles are immediately to be referred to God, is ſo far from leaving us open to deluſion and impoſture, that it contains our greateſt ſecurity from it; it furniſhes us with all the evidence we can derive from the wiſdom, veracity, and perfect rectitude of the divine Being, that the atteſtation of miracles cannot accompany any falſe doctrines. It has never been ſhewn, that ſuch doctrines ever have received * the atteſtation of miracles: and inaſmuch as miracles are works appropriate to God, it is impoſſible that ſuch doctrines ever ſhould receive this atteſtation. Whenever therefore the miracle is *apparent*, (there being either ocular demonſtration, or other certain evidence of its truth;) it is not neceſſary to enquire, whether the doctrine be ſuch as *may* come from God, or *may* be true: for the miracle (being divine) does alone aſſure us, previous to ſuch enquiry, that it *did* come from God, and therefore that it *is* true; nay, that it is as impoſſible it ſhould be falſe or immoral, or abſurd, as it is that God ſhould act contrary to his own perfections. If the miracle be of *dubious* evidence, and the doctrine ſuch as

* See above, ch. 2. ſect. 2.

as could not proceed from God; the proper inference will be, not that the miracle was performed by wicked ſpirits, but that it was invented by wicked men. The conſideration of the doctrine may ſerve, in this caſe, to detect the falſehood of miracles; but is never neceſſary to eſtabliſh the divinity of theſe works, or the truth and divinity of the doctrine itſelf which they are wrought to confirm: the latter muſt be true and divine, becauſe the former can have no other author but God. The objection therefore puts a caſe which can never poſſibly happen: it ſuppoſes that God may publiſh and atteſt a falſehood to the world.

II. The proof of a divine miſſion and doctrine from miracles, is the moſt *natural* and *agreeable to the common ſenſe of mankind* in all ages. The works of creation are ſtanding evidences of the exiſtence and attributes of God. The continued order of the univerſe is a ſure demonſtration of his conſtant providence. It is upon the theatre of nature, that God is continually manifeſting himſelf to mankind. Here, therefore, it is moſt natural to ſuppoſe, he will diſplay his power, and ſignify his pleaſure; ſhould he ſee fit to make any new diſcoveries of his will. If he would evidence to his creatures the interpoſition of the Lord of nature; in what other method can this be ſo ſuitably done, as by controuling the laws of nature? And when he does this in anſwer to an immediate appeal to him, made by one who claims a miſſion from him; does he not declare in the moſt proper and expreſſive language, that it is his will, that that claim ſhould be received and admitted?

This

This appears to have been the general ſenſe of mankind in all ages, concerning genuine miracles; as we have had occaſion to ſhew *.

The natural ſenſe of mankind with regard to this, as well as other ſubjects, may, no doubt, be in ſome meaſure perverted by ſophiſtry and ſuperſtition. And it has been by ſome affirmed, that in the age in which the Goſpel was publiſhed, both Jews and Gentiles entertained a very *low opinion* of miracles in general. From hence others have been forward to conclude, that they were not a very proper means of recommending the Goſpel to the regard of mankind. It is not true, however, that genuine and inconteſtable miracles were held in diſeſteem at the commencement of the Chriſtian era. The Jews indeed objected to Chriſt, that he diſpoſſeſſed demoniacs by the aſſiſtance of the prince of demons; but it has been ſhewn †, that they did not, and could not, paſs the like judgments on his other miraculous works. Their own religion being grounded upon miracles; they were not ſo abſurd as to deny their being proper proofs of a divine miſſion. Miracles were not only an evidence, by which they were determined, but which they preferred to any other: "The Jews require a ſign ‡."

With

* Ch. 2. ſect. 5.

† Ch. 3. ſect. 6. p. 270. Mr. Biſcoe, after others, aſſerts, that both Jews and Heathens aſcribed the miracles both of Chriſt and his apoſtles to the power of magic. Sermons at Boyle's Lecture, p. 293. But his authorities will not ſupport his aſſertion, in this large extent.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 22.

With reſpect to the Greeks or Gentiles, the learned amongſt them, it is acknowleged, *ſought after wiſdom*, were captivated with curious ſpeculations, ſet off with the charms of eloquence; and may in ſome ſenſe be ſaid to have held miracles in contempt *, that is, *ſuch* events as were by them commonly deſcribed by this term. Theſe were of two ſorts. Some of them, though eſteemed miracles by the vulgar, were not really ſuch, but mere natural events; inundations, prodigies, monſters, together with all the feats of ſorcery and magic: and theſe might very reaſonably be rejected by all who were acquainted with the powers of nature † and art. Others were events truly ſupernatural; but they were conſidered as groſs impoſtures. They were not only ſo ill atteſted, but ſo incredible in themſelves, ſo deſtitute of all rational intention and wiſe contrivance, ſo viſibly calculated to ſerve ſome political purpoſe, ſo trifling, or ridiculous, or abſurd in their own nature; that it cannot be matter of wonder, that the wiſer Heathens rejected them with diſdain. Marcus Antoninus in particular deſpiſed all the ſtories of them, under the notion of their being mere fables. His words are, "I have "learnt not to believe thoſe things which are re- "ported concerning wonder-workers, or jugglers and "magicians, in relation to their charms, and expul-

"ſion

* Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, ſagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Theſſala rides? Hor.

† Vid. Tacit. Hiſt. l. 1. c. 86. & l. 2. c. 1.

"fion of demons, and the like *." The followers of Epicurus were under a neceſſity of rejecting every hiſtory of miracles; becauſe they denied a providence, and thought the gods did not intereſt themſelves in the affairs of mankind †. But this very reaſoning ſhews, that they conſidered miracles as divine operations, and therefore were not diſpoſed to deride the works themſelves, had they been convinced that any ſuch works had been truly performed.

The proof of revelation therefore from real and unſuſpected miracles, was not improper to be propoſed to the Heathen world: for it is one thing to ſuſpect or deny the *truth* of miracles; and quite another, when we allow their truth, to diſpute their authority ‡. How well this evidence was adapted to the

* Marc. Anton. l. 1. § 6. Plutarch likewiſe (de Superſtit. p. 171.) ranks γοητεῖαι and μαγεῖαι amongſt the moſt ridiculous parts of Pagan ſuperſtition. Θαύματα μώροις, might well grow into a proverb, with reſpect to ſuch miracles; which were fit only to produce the ſcorn and averſion which Horace expreſſes,

Aut in avem Progne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
Quodcunque oſtendis mihi ſic, incredulus odi.
De Art. Poet. l. 187.

† ——— Credat Judæus Apella,
Non ego; namque deos didici ſecurum agere ævum.
Horat. Sat. l. 1. Sat. 5. l. 100.

‡ It may here be objected, that thoſe Heathens who believed a providence, aſcribed miracles to demons. But it will not follow from hence, that they believed that demons wrought miracles in oppoſition to heaven, and in confirmation of falſehood. Πάντη ἄρα ἀψευδὲς τὸ δαιμόνιόν τε καὶ τὸ θεῖον. Plat. de Repub. l. 2. p. 431. ed. Ficini. Should any aſk, How came it to

the ſtate of the Heathens, appears from its great ſucceſs, in converting them from atheiſm and idolatry to the Chriſtian faith. And this ſucceſs would have been ſtill greater, had there been no more objection to the *doctrine*, than there was to the *miracles* of Chriſtianity: for theſe works immediately diſgraced all the artifices of impoſture *, and bore upon themſelves ſuch characters of divinity, that the Heathens regarded the performers of them as *gods*, and were with difficulty reſtrained from paying them divine honours †. From what has been advanced under this head, it in ſome meaſure appears, that,

III. Miracles form the moſt *eaſy* and *compendious* proof of a new revelation; ſuch as lies level to the capacities of all mankind, even of thoſe who have little leiſure or ability for deep reſearches after truth. That *the bulk of mankind* are not endowed with faculties to apprehend the force of long and intricate reaſonings; and that the neceſſary duties of their ſtation engroſs almoſt all their attention; are facts too plain to be diſputed. And to thoſe who are at all acquainted with the writings of *the learned*, it is as evident, that thoſe abſtract reaſonings which are above the capacity of the vulgar, are often unſatisfactory to perſons

to paſs that the Heathens did not pay more regard to the miracles of Chriſtianity? I would refer them for ſatisfaction to Dr. Law's "Conſiderations," &c. p. 121. note e. 3d ed. who treats this ſubject with his uſual candour and judgment.

* See Acts viii. 9—24. ch. xiii. 8—11. ch. xix. 19.

† Acts xiv. 11—13.

perſons of judgment; and may generally be oppoſed by arguments ſo probable, as to cauſe perſons of the beſt abilities to doubt on which ſide truth is to be found. The ſpeculations which have had the ſanction of one age, have been exploded in the next; nay, thoſe which have reigned abſolute over all the cultivated parts of the world, for many ages together, are now ſunk into contempt. And the new opinions which are ſubſtituted in the room of the former exploded ones, may hereafter undergo the ſame fate with them. For there is very little certainty in any ſcience, (except mathematical,) any farther than the reaſoning is grounded upon *facts*. God therefore intending the Chriſtian revelation for the benefit of all, founded it upon an evidence adapted to the capacities of all; upon ſuch *facts* as clearly demonſtrated his own interpoſition and countenance; and exhibited to the very ſenſes, as well as to the underſtandings of mankind, the doctrines they were deſigned to atteſt, the miracles being ſpecimens or ſamples of thoſe doctrines. This teſtimony which God bore to his Son, was equally fitted to convince the learned and illiterate; the force of it was eaſily and immediately apprehended, by all who were willing to open their eyes, and ſee the light. Had it been neceſſary, that mankind ſhould have been made *philoſophers*, before they became *Chriſtians*; how ſmall, and how ſlow a progreſs would the Goſpel have made; eſpecially as it was to be publiſhed to thoſe, who had the greateſt need of ſupernatural aſſiſtance, whoſe underſtandings had been debaſed by ſuperſtition and idolatry, and whoſe minds were inflamed by

prejudices and bigotry, as well as undiſciplined to thought and reflection, and employed about the cares of life? But the Goſpel, by being accompanied with a proof of its divinity, that was plain and eaſy, and carried inſtant conviction, did in a ſhort time eſtabliſh itſelf in every part of the earth. This divine light, like that of the ſun, enlightens every man without any diſtinction, and in a moment darts its beams from one end of the world to the other.

IV. Miracles are a very *powerful* method of conviction, making a ſtrong impreſſion upon *the heart*, at the ſame time that they carry light to the underſtanding. Such ſenſible and unuſual effects, pointing out the immediate hand of God in producing them, arreſt the attention, rouſe the mind from the ſupine ſtate into which it was ſunk, ſtrike it with an awe of God, impreſs the conviction of his peculiar preſence, and carry with them an obligation to receive and obey the truths which they confirm. They add weight and energy to thoſe truths, whoſe importance thus intereſts heaven in their behalf. Every one who conſiders the wiſdom and majeſty of the divine Being, muſt be ſenſible, that no trivial occaſion, that nothing but the execution of ſome deſign of the higheſt importance, can induce him in any inſtance to ſuſpend his own laws, and produce events quite out of the ſettled order of his government. I add, that miracles, when they are not related, but *ſeen;* and when they are performed in our preſence in a manner worthy of the Divinity; make a very peculiar impreſſion; they muſt ſtrike the mind much more powerfully, than any hiſtory (whatever credit we

we give it) can do. So that in theſe circumſtances, no man can reſiſt their efficacy, without contracting a peculiar guilt, and incurring an high degree of the divine diſpleaſure; which was accordingly denounced by Chriſt and his apoſtles, againſt ſuch as withſtood the conviction of thoſe mighty works, by which the Goſpel was confirmed *.

V. Powerful as theſe means of conviction may be, they are *not violent and compulſive;* nor do they produce their full effect, in engaging men to receive and obey a new revelation, without the exerciſe of right diſpoſitions of mind. Whatever ſome have ſuggeſted to the contrary, by miracles God appeals to our *reaſon*, to judge whether they are operations of his power, and evidences of his will; and whether thoſe at whoſe inſtance they are performed, are commiſſioned to deliver it. And when the underſtanding is convinced, that the miſſion is divine, our compliance with the meſſage is an act of the will. Miracles are the ſame method of addreſs to mankind, as the works of nature, conſidered as the effects of God's power, and the ſignifications of his will, which neither produce a full conviction without ſome attention and reflection, nor obedience without a becoming reverence of God.

Miracles, it may be ſaid, neceſſarily ſtrike the mind with aſtoniſhment; but ſo likewiſe do the wonders of nature, while they are new: and this, in either

* John xv. 24. Mat. xi. 21. ch. xii. 31, 32. Heb. vi. 4, &c. ch. x. 29.

caſe, (uſeful as it may prove to ſome,) is of little uſe to thoſe, who ſtudiouſly divert their thoughts from the operations of the divine hand, and are only looking out for matter of cavil againſt them. Miracles are no remedy for obſtinacy; nor can the brighteſt manifeſtations of the Divinity open thoſe eyes which are wilfully cloſed. Signs of an extraordinary divine interpoſition will attract the readieſt regard from thoſe, who have cultivated right ſentiments towards God, and are previouſly prepared to obey his will. So that the evidence of miracles is not unſuitable to the nature of religion, as a reaſonable and voluntary ſervice; nor to the nature of man, as a moral agent; and at the ſame time it is peculiarly adapted to gain thoſe over to the faith of the Chriſtian revelation, who are beſt diſpoſed to comply with its deſign *.

VI. The *neceſſity* of miracles is no leſs evident, than their propriety and advantage, in atteſting a divine commiſſion, and propagating a new revelation. For how can God give any evidence of his will, but by the operations of his power, or the effects of his omniſcience? By what but the outward and ſenſible diſplays of both, can he bear a public teſtimony to an extraordinary meſſenger from heaven? The general laws of nature and providence anſwer the end for which they were deſigned; but cannot

* This account of miracles is confirmed, by the effects which thoſe of the Goſpel produced. Some rejected this evidence, others were convinced, but not laſtingly reformed by it, (Mat. vii. 22, 23.) on others it had a perfect and permanent influence; according to their reſpective diſpoſitions.

cannot ſerve the purpoſe of a peculiar atteſtation to a prophet of God. Nor can the excellent tendency of the doctrine, ſeparately conſidered, prove that it came from God. Had Chriſtianity been only a republication of the law of nature, or a revival of certain principles obſcured by ſuperſtition, but demonſtrable by reaſon, when awakened into exerciſe; even then miracles would have been *uſeful* to excite the attention of the world to thoſe principles, and to give them new evidence and certainty; nay, *neceſſary*, though not to eſtabliſh their *truth*, yet to prove a particular *divine commiſſion*, to revive the knowlege of them, and thereby to give the publiſhers of them the greater authority to reform the world, and procure them a more ſpeedy ſucceſs. But when a new religion is (like that of the Goſpel) the free reſult of the divine wiſdom for the ſalvation of ſinful men, and contains brighter diſplays of the divine philanthropy, than natural reaſon is acquainted with; how can the divine original of ſuch a new religion be eſtabliſhed, if no ſupernatural teſtimony be borne to it by God?

The more immediate deſign of the miracles of the Goſpel, was, to prove the divine commiſſion of the firſt publiſhers of it, and to engage men to receive it as an immediate meſſage from God. They were more eſpecially intended to demonſtrate Jeſus of Nazareth to be the Meſſiah, the divinely appointed prince and ſaviour: a claim that could not be ſupported, but by the divine teſtimony of prophecies and miracles. Chriſt not only aſſumed the honour of a prophet of God, but a far ſuperior dignity and authority to any of the prophets; he ſpoke of himſelf

ſelf as the Son of God, in a ſenſe peculiar and tranſcendent; as one appointed to govern the church, and to judge the world. Now, the more extraordinary his claims were, ſo much the more neceſſary was it to confirm them by adequate miracles. Had Chriſt reaſoned like a philoſopher, he might have been eſteemed as ſuch; but, without producing proper credentials of a divine miſſion* and authority, he could not have enforced his inſtructions upon the conſcience, as the immediate dictates and oracles of the Divinity; nor have been received by the world under his proper character, as the Son of God, the Saviour, Sovereign, and Judge of mankind. Chriſt had ſuffered death, as a malefactor. His apoſtles affirmed, that God had raiſed him up again, advanced him to a ſtate of the higheſt dignity and authority in his preſence and kingdom, and inveſted him with power to beſtow immortality on his followers. But, who ought or could give credit to their doctrine and teſtimony, if it had not been confirmed by God himſelf, on whoſe good pleaſure alone the conſtitution of the Goſpel was founded? It was impoſſible by reaſon, to prove the antecedent propriety and neceſſity of ſuch a conſtitution. If any thing can render the neceſſity of miracles to confirm and propagate the Goſpel, ſtill more apparent; it is the conſideration of the

* This argument might receive large illuſtration from the caſe of Moſes, both as a divine ambaſſador to Pharaoh, and a divine legiſlator to the Iſraelites. Even his main doctrine, viz. that the God of the Hebrews was the only true God, as well as his commiſſion, could be eſtabliſhed only by miracles.

the great corruption * of the world, at the time of Chriſt's appearance in it, creating in men a diſaffection to the purity of this new revelation; the diſgrace and danger that attended the public profeſſion of it; the violent prejudices entertained both by Jews and Gentiles againſt the doctrine of the croſs; the Goſpel's ſuperſeding the neceſſity of the Jewiſh revelation, and eſtabliſhing itſelf upon the ruins of Pagan idolatry; and the conſequent oppoſition it met with from all the powers of the world. Theſe difficulties and obſtructions could not have been ſurmounted, if the Goſpel had not been ſupported and recommended by the moſt unqueſtionable operations of God's power, and the plaineſt teſtimonies of his approbation.

VII. Miracles, while they are more immediately and directly employed in introducing and eſtabliſhing a new revelation, may ſerve to revive and confirm the principles of natural religion, and to recover men from thoſe two oppoſite extremes of atheiſm and idolatry. Into the one or other of theſe extremes, the world was very generally fallen, in the age of the Goſpel. Perſons in the higher ranks of life, were infected with atheiſm; thoſe in the lower, were quite

* See what was urged above, to ſhew the neceſſity of confirming the Goſpel by miracles, and of conſidering theſe works as in themſelves certain evidences of a divine interpoſition, from the conſideration of the ſtrong prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles againſt the claims of Chriſt, and from the great corruption of the age in which the Goſpel was publiſhed, ch. 2. ſect. 6.

over-run with idolatry. Now, no properer cure of both theſe evils could be preſcribed, than miracles.

1. Theſe works confute the pretences of *atheiſm*, and afford new evidence of thoſe firſt principles of all religion, the being and providence of God. It has, indeed, been often affirmed, that miracles offered in ſupport of a miſſion from God, do only ſuppoſe, and cannot demonſtrate, his exiſtence. Nevertheleſs, if they are his immediate acts, and prove a divine miſſion; they muſt prove that there is a God, from whom the miſſionary comes, and by whoſe authority he acts. Supernatural ſigns and wonders demonſtrate his exiſtence, in the ſame way of reaſoning as the works of nature do. In both caſes we proceed on one common principle, that every effect muſt have ſome cauſe; and argue from the viſible effects, to an inviſible cauſe, by which they were produced. If you conſider only the grandeur of the works, the exiſtence of the world (ſo replete with wonders!) bears a more ample teſtimony to the being of a God, than all the miracles of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations. Nevertheleſs, *occaſional* and *uncommon* operations of the divine power have this peculiar advantage to recommend them, that they ſtrike our attention more forcibly, than that ſettled courſe of things, which falls under our conſtant obſervation.

Miracles not only contain a new demonſtration of God's exiſtence, but ſtrengthen the proofs of it drawn from the frame of the world, and clear them from the two principal objections of atheiſm, viz. either that the world is eternal, or elſe owed its exiſtence to the fortuitous concourſe of atoms. Sometimes the

the atheiſt affirms, that the world was never made at all, but has exiſted from eternity juſt as it is at preſent; and is ſubject to fate or neceſſity: and thus he endeavours to evade the argument drawn from nature, to prove the exiſtence of its Creator and Lord. But the ſupernatural proof of this important point is not liable to the ſame objection, and is even ſerviceable in removing it. No one affirms, that miracles exiſted from eternity; and if they are really effected, they muſt have a cauſe. If they are effected at the interceſſion of a prophet, and in atteſtation of his commiſſion, they muſt have a voluntary deſigning cauſe; and cannot be aſcribed either to neceſſity or fate. And inaſmuch as they controul or ſuperſede the laws of nature; their efficient cauſe muſt be diſtinct from nature, and ſuperior to it; and can be no other than the ſovereign Lord of nature, the ſame whom we call God. Not to add, that had the world been eternal, the courſe of nature would have continued the ſame without any interruption. Nor can viſible ſigns of an inviſible power that commands nature, be any more reconciled with the formation of the world by the fortuitous concourſe of atoms, than with the notion of its eternal neceſſary exiſtence. In oppoſition to both theſe pleas, they prove the world to be the work of a free and almighty Agent *. For who can controul the ſettled courſe of nature, but that

* So that whether the apoſtle conſidered *the declaration* of Moſes, Gen. i. 1. as that of a prophet, or the *credentials* of his miſſion; he might ſay, "By faith we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God," Heb. xi. 3. Faith ſupplies us with new evidence of this truth, without weakening that

that great Being that eſtabliſhed it? If the world had no creator, it could have no lord. He alone who cauſed it to be what it is, could make what changes in it he pleaſed. The viſible ſigns of God's power do ſo clearly demonſtrate his exiſtence, that the atheiſt denies there ever were any miracles, to avoid being compelled into the belief of a God.

Miracles alſo bear a noble teſtimony to divine providence. They are actual exerciſes of God's juriſdiction over the world, and therefore a proof of fact that he governs it, and intereſts himſelf in its affairs. Prophecies likewiſe are a farther illuſtration and evidence of this important truth. When they deſcribe the moſt contingent events, the actions of free agents; comprehend the fates of various nations and perſons; and reach through a great length of ages; they afford a moſt ſenſible proof of the univerſal and perpetual ſuperintendency of an unerring providence. Theſe miraculous effects of the divine power and knowlege, are a very valuable *addition* to that evidence of God's exiſtence and government, which ariſes from the order of nature; and ſerve to vindicate and confirm it.

2. Miracles are a remedy againſt the evil of *idolatry*, as well as that of atheiſm. In the opinion of idolaters themſelves, theſe works are a demonſtration of a divine power *. And when they are performed

that of reaſon. And Moſes might clearly and certainly infer from his miracles, even without an immediate revelation, that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

* Acts xiv. 11.

formed in the name of Jehovah, under the character of the only living and true God, in direct oppoſition to all the claims of idolatry; they equally eſtabliſh the divinity of Jehovah, and confute the pretenſions of all his rivals and oppoſers. The truth of his claims neceſſarily infers the falſehood of theirs. Miracles, being in themſelves exerciſes of God's ſovereign dominion over the powers of nature, which were the principal gods of Paganiſm, and from whom the inferior deities were ſuppoſed to derive all their authority; overturn the very foundation of the Pagan idolatry, and bring men to the knowlege of the true God *.

This

* 1 Theſſ. i. 9, 10. 1 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Acts xiv. 15. Mr. Voltaire (in his Dictionaire Philoſophique, p. 268.) ſeems to approve of the philoſopher, who ſaid, that the ſight of miracles would convince him of the exiſtence of two oppoſite principles, one of whom undoes what the other had been doing. This objection proceeds on the falſe ſuppoſition, that miracles contradict or defeat the intention of the laws of nature: whereas they only aim at an end, which could not be anſwered by the regular operation of thoſe laws; (as was ſhewn above, p. 21.) And it is evident, that, when they are performed in the name of the true God, and in proof of his ſole dominion over nature, or (which is the ſame thing in effect) in proof of a miſſion from him, under the character of the ſole author and ſovereign of the world, and are not (as they never can be) controuled by oppoſite miracles; inſtead of eſtabliſhing, they directly confute the doctrine of two or more rival deities. Accordingly, the miracles of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations were the means of converting men from polytheiſm, to the faith and worſhip of the true God. "By him (Chriſt) ye believe in God, that raiſed him from "the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope "might be in God." 1 Pet. i. 21.

This argument might receive large illuſtration from the *peculiar nature* of the Scripture miracles, were this the proper place for entering on the examination of them. But we are here only ſhewing the uſe of miracles in general, in bearing teſtimony to the exiſtence, unity, and providence of God; and conſidering theſe works in their moſt general view, as divine operations.

For this reaſon, we forbear likewiſe to ſhew, that when miracles are in their own nature, diſplays of the beneficence and rectitude of the divine Being, inſtances of his favour or diſpleaſure, according to mens different characters; and are likewiſe ſubſervient to a ſcheme calculated to recover men to piety and virtue; they are then a new confirmation of God's *moral* perfections and providence, ſuch as may ſerve for the conviction of all who call them into queſtion, and be of ſingular uſe to thoſe who worſhip gods of the moſt flagitious characters, and do it by acts of wickedneſs ſuitable to their apprehended natures. Thus the antient Heathens did; who nevertheleſs were recovered by ſuch miracles as are here deſcribed, to the knowledge and adoration of the Holy One of Iſrael.

The foregoing obſervations are, I hope, ſufficient to ſhew, that how low an opinion ſoever thoſe may entertain of miracles, who will not allow them to be the immediate operation of God; yet when conſidered in this their true light, their uſe, importance, and neceſſity in introducing and eſtabliſhing a new revelation, is clearly diſcerned; and that, while they give authority to a prophet to reveal the divine will to mankind,

mankind, they bear a ſtriking teſtimony to the exiſtence and providence of God, and are highly uſeful, if not neceſſary, for the conviction of mankind, when ſunk into atheiſm and idolatry. They have actually anſwered this end, when all the works of nature failed of their effect. I would only obſerve farther,

VIII. That the evidence of miracles (whether of power or knowlege) is the fitteſt to accompany a ſtanding revelation; becauſe it is not confined to one age or nation, but may be extended over the whole globe, and conveyed to the moſt diſtant generations. Miracles of *power* carry inſtant conviction, procure preſent credit to a prophet; and muſt make a very peculiar impreſſion on the ſpectators. Nevertheleſs, their uſe is not confined to them; for they may be ſo credible in themſelves, ſo ſtrongly atteſted, ſo faithfully recorded, and ſo neceſſarily connected with other ſubſequent facts, not to be diſputed, nor accounted for in a natural way, as to leave no room for thoſe to doubt of their reality, who had not the advantage of ſeeing them performed. With reſpect to miracles of *knowledge;* they ſerve in ſome inſtances for immediate uſe, particularly the diſcoveries of diſtant and hidden tranſactions, and of the ſecrets of the human heart. There are other inſtances of ſupernatural knowlege, the predictions of future events, which are deſigned to carry conviction in ſome diſtant period. The diſtances between the delivery of the prophecies and their accompliſhment may be very different: ſome prophecies may receive a ſpeedy completion; others may be gradually accompliſhing through many ſucceeding ages, to the very end of time;

time; and hereby furniſh evidence to the world through all theſe different periods. Such prophecies are a *ſtanding* and *perpetual* evidence of the miſſion of a prophet; always lying *open* to the view and examination of the world. They give credibility to the hiſtory of his other miracles, being themſelves one ſpecies of miracles, ſuch as neceſſarily argue a ſpecial divine interpoſition. And the evidence ariſing from them, inſtead of being diminiſhed, will be increaſed by their diſtance from the time of their delivery, as the events foretold ſucceſſively happen.

From the whole of what has been offered, in this and the ſeveral foregoing chapters, it appears, I hope, that it can be no objection againſt the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations, that they reſt upon the baſis of miracles.

THE END.

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